

STATES OF NOMADISM, CONDITIONS OF DIASPORA:
STUDIES IN WRITING BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA
AND THE UNITED STATES, 1913 - 1936

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in English Studies

University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Pietermaritzburg

2008

ABSTRACT

Using the theoretical idea of ‘writing between’ to describe the condition of the travelling subject, this study attempts to chart some of the literary, intellectual and cultural connections that exist(ed) between black South African intellectuals and writers, and the experiences of their African-American counterparts in their common movements towards civil liberty, enfranchisement and valorised consciousness. The years 1913-1936 saw important historical events taking place in the United States, South Africa and the world – and their effects on the peoples of the African diaspora were significant. Such events elicited unified black diasporic responses to colonial hegemony. Using theories of transatlantic/transnational cultural negotiation as a starting point, conceptualisations that map out, and give context to, the connections between transcontinental black experiences of slavery and subjugation, this study seeks to re-envisage such black South African and African-American intellectual discourses through reading them anew. These texts have been re-covered and re-situated, are both published and unpublished, and engage the notion of travel and the instability of transatlantic voyaging in the liminal state of ‘writing between’. With my particular regional focus, I explore the cultural and intellectual politics of these diasporic interrelations in the form of case studies of texts from several genres, including fiction and autobiography. They are: the travel writings of Xhosa intellectual, DDT Jabavu, with a focus on his 1913 journey to the United States; an analysis of Ethelreda Lewis’s novel, *Wild Deer* (1933), which imagines the visit of an African-American musician, Paul Robeson-like figure to South Africa; and Eslanda Goode Robeson’s representation of her *African Journey* (1945) to the country in 1936, and the traveller’s gaze as expressed through the ethnographic imagination, or the anthropological ‘eye’ in the text.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
List of Figures.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Declaration.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	
African Diaspora Theory, the Ghost of John Dube and the Cultural Politics of ‘Writing Between’.....	2
CHAPTER 2	
Establishing Trajectories: Nomadism and the Space of Worldliness in the Writings of DDT Jabavu.....	36
CHAPTER 3	
Performance as Text / Autobiography as Performance: Davidson Jabavu in the United States and the Signifying of a Civilised Self, 1913.....	77
CHAPTER 4	
Imaginary Journeys, Autobiographical Subjects: Reading Liminalities, Limits and African-American Subjects in Ethelreda Lewis’s <i>Wild Deer</i>	136
CHAPTER 5	
Mrs Robeson in South Africa: Ethnographic Imaginings in an <i>African Journey</i>	202
CONCLUSION	
Connecting Concerns: The Meaning of ‘Diaspora’ and the Politics of Cultural Memory in Post-apartheid South Africa.....	258
Bibliography.....	270

LIST OF FIGURES
(from pages 121 to 135)

- 1 Photograph of a youthful Dube during his time as a student at Oberlin College. The image is from his published lecture, *A Familiar Talk Upon my Native Land and Some Things Found There* (1892).
- 2 Dube's writing desk, preserved in his home at Inanda township near Durban. He was neighbour to Mahatma Gandhi during the Indian leader's time in South Africa (1893-1914). The image was taken by cellular phone during my recent visit to the place (7 July 2007), which is now a museum and also houses Dube's printing press.
- 3 Frontispiece of DDT Jabavu's *E-Amerika* (1932a).
- 4 Frontispiece of the account of James Aggrey's travels in Africa and the United States (Smith 1932 [1929]).
- 5 DDT Jabavu in 1911, then a student at the University of London (University of South Africa).
- 6 DDT Jabavu, while a student at Birmingham University in 1914 (University of South Africa).
- 7 Poster promoting DDT Jabavu's musical performance of August 13, 1913, at Tuskegee. This performance is the most extensively described in the diary and the poster was pasted onto a side margin within the text.
- 8 A poster for a later performance that includes reference to one of the lectures that DDT Jabavu delivered to African-American audiences on Africa and South Africa.
- 9 DDT Jabavu, probably on board ship returning to South Africa in 1914 (University of Cape Town).
- 10 Hand-coloured postcard from Tuskegee Institute which had been placed in the back of Jabavu's diary.
- 11 Photographic portrait of Ethelreda Lewis [from Couzens (1992a)].
- 12 Cover of the 1984 reissue of *Wild Deer* by David Philip. Cover illustration of Robert de la Harpe by Anne Sassoon.

- 13 Paul Robeson as Othello in a career-defining performance of the Moor.
- 14 A photograph of Paul Robeson, after whom the character of de la Harpe is partly modelled. [from Eslanda Goode Robeson's *Paul Robeson, Negro* (1930)].
- 15 Photograph of Clements Kadalie from his autobiography (1970).
- 16 Photograph of Roland Hayes.
- 17 The map of Eslanda Goode Robeson's *African Journey*.
- 18 The map of part of the South African leg of Robeson's trip.
- 19 Eslanda Goode Robeson and Pauli arriving in Cape Town. (*The Outspan*, July 10, 1936)
- 20 Eslanda Goode Robeson's son, Pauli (extreme right), with the Elders of Ngite. (*African Journey*)
- 21 Pauli and Eslanda Goode Robeson visit with the Mulamuzi, the chief justice of Buganda, at his home in Uganda.
- 22 The map of Robeson's journey through Central Africa, important given that it traces the progression of her anthropological fieldwork undertaking.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In writing these acknowledgements I also set out a preface to this study. This project was begun and ended on opposite sides of an ocean that has been the basis of its historical and present formation. The tides of transatlantic slavery; the peopling of the New World; the journey of black South African people to this recently-formed 'home' in the first half of the twentieth century; the imaginings and implications of it for several transoceanic black cultures; and the return of black Americans to the tragedy of another unattainable 'home', frame the concerns of this thesis.

What has facilitated my ability as a doctoral student to travel between such spaces has been the funding of the American government through its Fulbright scholarship programme (for nine months of research at the University of California, Los Angeles) that, historically and in the present, stands ambiguously between states of liberation in the present, and conditions of oppression in the past. The support of Deva Govindsamy and Riley Sever of the US Consulate-General in Durban were instrumental in my taking advantage of this opportunity.

The first note of thanks must go to my supervisor, Dr Catherine Woeber, for guiding the progress of this project. It is her support that has given me the opportunity to access the wonderful research resources in the United States and has kept me focused throughout this process. Professor Liz Gunner played an important part in the initial stages of this project as well, providing a sense of direction in the sea of research proposal confusion.

It is the South African National Research Foundation that generously funded this project for the first three years of its writing, and my Masters research (2003-2004).

There are many individuals and organisations to thank as well, but I will start with the Centre for African Literary Studies (CALS) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, and its three-year doctoral fellowship, extensive holdings and research facilities, that provided a stimulating base for intellectual reflection and growth. As always, I must also stress that the opinions expressed and conclusions deduced in this study are those of myself, the author, and are not necessarily to be attributed to these organisations or the institution at which I am registered for this qualification.

There are also the many librarians from different parts of the country whose assistance was vital. From the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus, and its Main Library Interlibrary Loans section particularly, I would like to thank Nazim Gani and Brenda Bosman for their continuous, invaluable assistance over the last three years, in locating and acquiring books and material without which the writing of this thesis could not have been possible. At the Durban (Howard College) campus, I would

like to thank Seema Maharaj for her assistance and friendly acquaintance as well; she has been a constant aid for the last six years. At the Killie Campbell Africana Library, Hloni Dlamini, Bobby Eldridge and Simon Shezi, were eager in their assistance in locating South African material that was of particular necessity in the case of John Dube. In the Eastern Cape, Andrew Martin of the National English Literary Museum (NELM) in Grahamstown directed me to several sources that I was not aware of. Ammie Ryke of the University of South Africa's Special Collections allowed me extensive access to the Jabavu Collection, without which I would have not been able to undertake most of the research. The National Library of South Africa and the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town were also important sources for locating material on the Robesons and South Africa. Additionally, Catherine Higgs was kind enough to provide a copy of Jabavu's "Tuskegee Report", while Professor Isabel Hofmeyr graciously provided a translation that she had commissioned of one Jabavu's most significant travel writings published in Xhosa by the Lovedale Press.

I would like to thank Cornelius Thomas, Director of the University of Fort Hare's National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre, particularly for a wonderful conference on the writings of AC Jordan that was held in East London. It provided a most fruitful space for discussing the intellectual environment and culture of the Eastern Cape.

In Durban, Professor Margaret Lenta provided vital assistance with editing and writing skills in 2007. I would not have come this far without her guidance. Her consultations were vital to the success of my project and I am most privileged to have been taught by her. Professor Keyan Tomaselli of the Culture, Communication and Media Studies postgraduate programme allowed me to participate in his Visual Anthropology course, which was very useful in clarifying my ideas about ethnography and the representation of the Other. Conversations with Dr Shane Moran proved most useful in giving me direction in certain broader matters of theory and history.

As always, thanks also to Professors Johan Jacobs and Sally-Ann Murray for their continued support.

And finally, a word of gratitude to Dr Lisbeth Gant-Britton of the Interdisciplinary Programme in Afro-American Studies at UCLA, for being a voice of sanity during important phases in this project and my time in the United States generally.

DECLARATION

This study represents the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any form to another University. Where use has been made of the work of others, this has been duly acknowledged in the text.

.....
Rogier Philippe Courau

October 2008

Who can say the African is naive? Who can say, if the African is able to put his case clearly and *directly* before the people of Europe, *in Europe*, that normal, decent, reasonable human beings will not be revolted by the shameful injustice of his treatment? What simple honest man in England, France, America, or elsewhere wants to be thought a tyrant, a brute, a greedy ruthless destructive beast by 150 million people - black or any other colour?

And what more propitious time than now, when peoples all over the world are facing and fighting down slavery, securing forever - they hope - freedom for all men. Africans are men. That fight, that hope will be in vain if that freedom is not granted to *all* men!

Eslanda Goode Robeson,
African Journey

Master came back with a wide piece of paper that he unfolded and lay out on the dining table, pushing aside books and magazines. He pointed with his pen. 'This is our world, although the people who drew this map decided to put their own land on top of ours. There is no top or bottom, you see.' Master picked up the paper and folded it, so that one edge touched the other, leaving a hollow between. 'Our world is round, it never ends. *Nee anya*, this is all water, the seas and oceans, and here's Europe and here's our own continent, Africa, and the Congo is in the middle. Farther up here is Nigeria, and Nsukka is here, in the southeast; this is where we are.' He tapped with his pen.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,
Half of a Yellow Sun

Chapter 1: Introduction

AFRICAN DIASPORA THEORY, THE GHOST OF JOHN
LANGALIBALELE DUBE AND THE CONTINGENCIES
OF 'WRITING BETWEEN'

The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the colour line.

Maurice S Evans, CMG,
*Black and White in the Southern States:
A Study of the Race Problem in the United States
from a South African Point of View*

[Quote lifted from an essay by WEB Du Bois published a decade earlier and not acknowledged.]

Interdisciplinary work, so much discussed these days, is not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let itself go). To do something interdisciplinary it's not enough to choose a 'subject' (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity consists in creating a new subject that belongs to no one.

Roland Barthes,
"Jeunes Chercheurs"

In his oration to dignitaries and mourners at the funeral of former South African member of government Stella Sigcau, president Thabo Mbeki set out her liberation struggle life history, with an educational background analogous to many of its other past and present leaders:

Those of us who came after her as students at the Lovedale Institution looked up to her and others across the Tyhume River, at Fort Hare, who were inevitably, our seniors, constituting the Fort Hare branch of the ANC Youth League [...]. [W]hen she graduated at Fort Hare, she joined the staff of Ohlange Institute as a teacher. Thus did she choose to serve the nation and begin her professional life as an educator at a famous institution established by that outstanding co-founder of the African National Congress, John Langali-

balele Dube.

The young graduate teacher from Fort Hare understood what John Dube had meant when, using the words and categories of his day, he wrote in 1907 to his famous African-American mentor, Booker T Washington, whom he had first met in 1897, saying:

‘A great number of civilised natives are anxious to push forward in spite of the prejudice of our white people. The condition (in South Africa) is much like that in the Southern States in America. They want our ignorant people to stay in their heathen condition so that they can only use them as beasts of burden. Those who aspire to something higher are not wanted.’ (Mbeki 2006)

At this event and many others during Mbeki’s presidency, the invocation of the black South African intellectual, or what he calls his “seniors”, and the allusion to African-American figures of the first half of the twentieth century as an important cultural reference, have been a feature of his speeches. The point of connection is a concomitant pride taken in the achievements of past black intellectuals. It is also important to note how Lovedale Institution and Fort Hare University College, which he was in the vicinity of during his speech, have served as important centres around which these voices, both present and past, could be seen to coalesce. This project seeks to explore the interstices or, spaces ‘between’, which signify the historical and textual conditions behind Mbeki’s nostalgia and the interconnections, both cultural and political, with African-Americans during the period 1913-1936.

As one contemporary black South African commentator writes in a collection of biographical sketches of black South African intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such a remembering as Mbeki’s is tantamount to the “recovery of ancient wisdom [...and] an exercise in the recovery of intellectual traditions as a tool to a better understanding of contemporary [South African] society” (Ndletyana 2008:vii). The same author criticises past colonialist representations of black Africans that suggest that they were bloodthirsty and did not possess the capacity for ‘higher civilisation’ as they had no writing systems to record their cultural and history.

Writing in the same publication, an unnamed member of the South African National Heritage Council emphasises what they feel is the collection's central purpose. Along with a concern for how black Africans "interpreted and reacted to colonial conquest" (2008:xi), the study possesses a focus that also informs the concerns of this thesis: to consider the multitude of ways in which public intellectuals (in this case the African, but also for our purposes the African-American), were compelled to "straddle both the Western and the African worlds in which they were grounded or exposed" (2008:xi). In addition to what the writer suggests about this being a matter of the dialectic (or tensions and interplay) between tradition and modernity, I seek to include a range of voices in this study, both black and white, that responded to the Other within the space 'between', a location defined through contestation, travel and imagining – a hypothesis which I shall expand upon later.

"The cultural histories of blacks in the United States and in Southern Africa provide evidence they have been leading parallel lives" (Cornwell 1986:285). And we begin with John Dube and his youthful experience in United States, because of his ghostly reappearance at the funeral of a member of the political elite in the form of Mbeki's nostalgia (he is known for writing his own speeches). The ever-present fact is the cultural hybridity implicit in the formation of the educated black intellectual, mediating between the coloniser and the colonised's identity and language. This is the fact that informs my reading and analysis of the texts under consideration in this study, and why Dube, as a visitor and student in the United States, serves as an effective example for introducing the themes that are its focus. Here, the readings and the subjects that have produced them are informed and formed by cultural hybridity, at once fixed with a national origin, but bound up in writing outside of their 'home space' – in a 'between' state – attempting to mediate betwixt the instabilities of self and other that characterise travel writing and the nomadism of global modernity in its twentieth century manifestation.

We can read this set of contradictory energies between tradition, modernity, Christianity and indigenous cultural or religious forms, in several ways: at once as a Du Boisian form of double consciousness (see Dayal 1996); or in line with the writing of Homi Bhabha (see Bhabha 1994), as the colonised subject's ambivalent condition of being, caught between pre-

colonial tradition and a predominantly Euro-American modernity. African and black American intellectuals challenged the repressive conditions that they sought to resist by doing so through writing and performance. Current thinking such as Mbeki's attempts to move beyond the mimic-man label attached to such individuals as John Tengo Jabavu, his son DDT Jabavu and the other important intellectuals of the period. In our contemporary reading of the place and space of these thinkers, we must be attuned to and aware of the contexts from which they wrote. I also seek to explore the textualities of self-representation and imagining that they set out in their writing through the application of contemporary postcolonial and diaspora theory to their work.

Intellectuals like John Dube and the Jabavu family (whom we will be concerned with later) are also more than subjects of value for Thabo Mbeki's nostalgia, yet the importance of his project lies in the space for remembering that is given these intellectuals in the present. An important force behind the rise of these intellectuals were the American Board Mission and London Missionary Society whose representatives spread the message of Christian modernity throughout Africa and the British empire. The Christian missionary presence was instrumental in the development of these black intellectuals (education being the most important source of support), as would be seen in the Quakers' funding of DDT Jabavu's travels in the United States in 1913. While this study concerns itself with autobiographical, political and fictional works, it is cogent at this point to highlight the role of missionary writing in the dissemination of Western colonial values and religion on the African colonised peoples. The space of the intercultural is exemplified in these texts in the ways in which the missionaries represented the processes of proselytisation and education. Johnston, for example, writes that missionary texts "are crucial to understanding cross-cultural encounters under the aegis of empire because they illuminate the formation of a mode of mutual imbrication between white imperial subjects, white colonial subjects, and non-white colonial subjects" (2003:3). Similarly, this dynamic interrelatedness of cultures in a space of difference is of fundamental concern to this study.

Such a form "mutual imbrication" (see Gikandi 1996:xviii) can be understood both as the entanglements established between coloniser and colonised through culture contact, and also how the imperial archive should

be treated as complex and its analysis not be limited by a focus on the monologic voice of imperial authority. This necessitates examining and treating with equal focus the reactions of one to the other, and the appropriation of cultural knowledge between both. While the application of Johnston's ideas (she focuses on the first half on the nineteenth century) might be considered anachronistic when applied to the later period with which I am concerned here, and that includes the writing and culture of African-Americans in an interrelated fashion, it is useful in exploring the tensions between culture at any point in colonial modernity. While many postcolonial literary scholars in the present are concerned with the image of the exilic author, I am more concerned with the condition and state of nomadism established through the travelling African diasporic subject's desire to know the Other, to be informed, to be educated, or to challenge the constrictive Anglo-American colonial political and social conditions imposed on black subjects that were (and contestably remain today) the character of much of the twentieth century.

The common experience of subjugation under white colonial authority has always been central to Mbeki's invocation of diaspora politics, and I refer to the anti-apartheid struggle of the 1960s because that is the point from which Mbeki apprehends and imagines the Black Atlantic world. In much the same way as his predecessors, Mbeki views the struggle of black Americans for political liberation as part of a collective pan-African struggle of resistance to white colonial authority and neo-imperialism. He also fulfils the same sociopolitical role in the present that the earlier educated African elite did in the past (it emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly); they are a chief concern of this project. It is not the purpose of this introduction to engage in some critique of the post-apartheid political situation, but rather to show how the ghost of a figure like John Dube remains part of the black intellectual consciousness of today in South Africa – and establishes the concerns of this project through the reference to Booker T Washington. In his rhetoric, Mbeki connects the heroes of the past to the bureaucracy of the present and, by invoking the name and reputation of a Zulu intellectual in the heart of the Xhosa countryside, follows the ANC aim to create a pan-ethnic unity among Africans. He greatly values the message of unity that Dube espoused throughout his political career.

John Langalibalele Dube (1871-1946) was an important figure in South African history: he led a public life as an intellectual and educator, and, as Mbeki mentions in his speech, was the first president of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) from 1912-1917 [it became the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923]. He also co-founded the first Zulu-language newspaper, *Ilanga lase Natal*, in 1903, and he later became its editor. His father, the Reverend James Dube, was one of the first ordained African pastors of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. John Dube was born at the Inanda station of the American Zulu Mission in 1871.¹ In 1887 he left to study at Oberlin College in Ohio in the United States. Dube was one of few black South Africans of royal lineage to become involved in the politics and cause of his people. As a mission-educated Zulu, he felt the tension between the traditional practices of his society and the modernising forces of Western education, and their benefits for his people.

Building on their missionary training, increasingly aware of Negro progress in the United States, and often hospitably entertained in Britain, they returned with visions of social, economic, and political progress for their people, ideals of racial toleration, and expectations of gradual but steadily increasing participation by educated tribesmen – Zulus, Xhosas, and so on – in a wider, multi-racial South Africa. (Walshe 1969:590)

When Dube arrived at Oberlin College, he “had only his clothing, and two shillings remaining, all that was left of his mother’s money” (Marable 1976:63). He realised that he would need to obtain some form of employment to survive and struggled to find work, but was eventually successful. His existence, however, was rather peripatetic. Dube stayed at Oberlin until 1890, studying mathematics, the sciences, classics, and developing his skills at oratory. In 1888 he “began work at a local printing firm, and he learned the skills of editing and publishing” (Marable 1976:66), the training which would be important for his subsequent work on *Ilanga lase Natal*.

Dube maintained a sustained correspondence with Booker T Wash-

ington, principal of the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama. Dube would become the “Washington of Natal” (Walshe 1970:54) and later founded one of the first schools of higher learning for black South Africans, the Zulu Christian Industrial School (1901). This was later renamed Ohlange Institute and similar in operational principles and curriculum to Tuskegee. Dube’s political efforts and range of later publications speak of his vital role as an African intellectual and his writing in the vernacular would do much to set out Zulu history and culture in forms that could be disseminated amongst students and part of the formation of a Zulu literary culture. In writing moral works, and with a particular focus on practical education, Dube was no doubt influenced by the work of Washington. In a letter, sent to Booker Washington in March of 1897, and on a second journey to the United States, Dube sets out Tuskegee’s influence on the founding of Ohlange:

I am very much interested in just the same work that you are for my people the Zulus of So. Africa. I am here preparing to return and start a school of an industrial character among them. I desire to have an interview with you for I wish to visit both Hampton and Tuskegee before my return to my native land. [...] Please drop me a card early to-morrow morning so that I may have the pleasure of seeing you. (Harlan, Smock & Woodruff (eds.) 1980:263)

Dube was in the United States at the time raising funds for Ohlange, his planned school. He was to attend a theological school in Brooklyn, New York and took the opportunity to begin developing a network of backers and related academic contacts. He wrote to Washington several months after his journey to the United States asking the leader for his endorsement of his activities in South Africa. Dube used his Christian upbringing to argue against racial inequality. As he writes in his own words, he wanted to present Washington with a picture of “how we have been ruled in the past”: he wanted to “give [Washington] an insight to our life in South Africa” (1980:338). He was also seeking out an agricultural teacher from either Hampton or Tuskegee to travel to South Africa to teach farming at the institution. Unfor-

unately, the South African government denied this request because “they fear[ed] that American Negroes would teach [black South African] people racial ill-feeling” (1980: 338).

As Ohlange progressed, Dube became more ambitious and began teaching skilled craftsmen, and wanted to prepare a select group of students for university (Walshe 1971:13). But perhaps the Zulu intellectual’s most important legacy for the concerns of this work was his writing of the world for his people in the vernacular (see Figure 2). Dube made them aware of the outside world. He also established important connections with leaders in India, such as Mahatma Gandhi who, as many have noted, used South Africa and his experiences there to test out ideas that he would later apply in his home country (Hofmeyr 2007:74). Gandhi was also a neighbour of Dube’s for a time, having founded the Natal Indian Congress in 1894, been instrumental in the development of the Phoenix settlement close to Ohlange and generally, committed to the political cause of rights for black and Indian peoples. I mention this here because of the important anti-colonial connections that would be established through this association and the role of India in the ANC’s anti-apartheid struggle.

While in the United States in his youth, Dube relied partly on the charity of others to survive. He would often give public lectures to continue his education, and spoke from a standard text that he devised for all of these situations. That generic lecture was published in Rochester, New York, as a pamphlet entitled *A Familiar Talk Upon my Native Land and Some Things Found There* (1892). I invoke this youthful text here because, as I have suggested, it serves as an interesting starting point for this project; it is a ‘precursor’ text to those under consideration in this study. It is an important early example of a black South African writer who, while not exiled from the ‘home’ space of Africa, attempted to write himself in relation to the ‘other space’ of the United States. In a form of struggle to assert his identity out of place, the subject (Dube) would affirm his identity by provoking the inquisitiveness of sympathetic American audiences through the conveying of his self and history. He thus represented and performed himself as an object of curiosity for his spectators. The young Dube (see Figure 1) is described in one character reference in *A Familiar Talk* as “bright, intelligent, and above all, Christian boy” (in Dube 1892:34) and by another as a “colored young man” (in Dube

1892:35). In his lecture Dube is constantly self-deprecating, emphasising “the enormity of his task [of civilising his people], and his incapacity to grapple with it” (1892:4). This tone is obviously meant to court the kindness of his audiences through their hoped-for admiration of his humility in the face of adversity.

Many black South Africans were educated abroad because they did not have the right to a university education that whites were assured at the turn of the century. Dube refers to the Zulu as “a people who have but recently seen the light of civilization” (1892:5), a “war-like people” (1892:8) who would eventually be subdued by the benefits of education and “the elevating influences of a higher Christian civilization” (1892:5). Dube constantly emphasises his deep sense of connection and duty to his people and “has coursing through his veins the same blood as those for whom this little book pleads, and of one who has consecrated his life and talents, feeble though they be, to the civilization of his people” (1892:4). He writes at this point in the third person, in the attempt, I believe, to establish a sense of distance from the culture (his own) that he is describing. He speaks of his family history with pride (indicated in the hagiographic descriptions of his father and grandfather as two of the most important Zulu men in history), and the arrival of the missionaries and their influence on his life. As he writes, “I was born in Natal, and educated at the mission schools. Then I became a Christian, and God put into my heart to become a teacher of my people. I resolved to go to America to perfect my education, so that I could do better work among my people” (1892:18). The emphasis on his Christian upbringing and education in the mission school in Natal links him to the Methodist circuits of affiliation that he connected with on his visit to the United States. He embraced the ‘light of civilisation’ and served as a fine example of the success of the missionary enterprise in Africa.

It is apparent, both in his physical appearance and in the nature of the discourse that Dube employs to represent Zulu identity for the occidental mind, that he was engaged in a form of performance. Dube is intent upon presenting a ‘civilised’ self: it is that of the Victorian gentleman. I argue later on in this study (see Chapter 3) that this, to make use of Henry Louis Gates’ (1988) term, is a form of performative act known as ‘signifying’, which involves repetition, difference, implication and association. Here, the

performing subject combines words and meanings to create or associate new ones. For Gates, this involves the act of writing particularly. 'Signifying' is a form of indirect action because the subject does not manifestly engage the audience with the performance's direct message. But through his self-representation and confidence of identity, Dube was able to persuade many audiences and manipulate their charitable impulses.

Further on in the text, when Dube describes the difficulties that he experienced in the United States, we observe the clearest instant of his sense of alienation because he is disconnected from the certainties of 'home'. In this partially exilic state he expresses the feelings of an outsider and reassures his audience that he and others like him will go home. Thus he allays their fears about the perceived threat of foreign immigration:

Since I have been in this country so that I may get an education that will fit me for work among my people, I have met with discouragement, suspicion and prejudice on the part of those who have been misled by the missionaries that they do not approve of the natives from foreign fields to come in this country, because after being in America they become so attached to the country that they do not desire to go back and that even if they go back, they are not satisfied with the conditions of being there. Friends, this is not so. There have been some Zulus in this country who have gone back as soon as they have completed their education. [...] A Zulu can have more influence among his people than a white man upon whom the Zulu first look with suspicion as though he is coming to claim their land as do the English Government agencies. (1892:32-33; italics in text)

In asserting an identity out of place and assuring the audience of his desire to depart the country after the successful completion of his education, Dube strategically employs the separatist logic that has been the cause of his sense of alienation in this foreign space. He emphasises his cultural difference as a means to establishing himself as the channel through which the light and knowledge of the western world can be conveyed to the Zulu people. He is in effect a conduit for the knowledge that will empower the awareness and intellect of the new class of colonised subject in South Africa that is to be

formed through the education and practical methods that he takes back with him to Natal. This dynamic implies much about the channels of transatlantic cultural interchange that were being established at the turn of the twentieth century, and the impact of African-American education on black Africans.

As I have suggested, in his work Dube identified the need to combine Western education with local customs, traditions and grounding in broad African communal behaviour. What makes Dube such an interesting figure is the complexity and nascent possibility for hybridity indicated in his thought. While the concern of my current research is on travel writing (autobiographical and fictional) between South Africa and the United States in the period 1913-1936, Dube's *A Familiar Talk* stands in useful comparison to the more complex texts that emerge later. Dube's lecture may not be defined as 'travel writing', but its function was to initiate a dialogue between American and black South African cultural knowledges. As Gilroy (2000:129-130) suggests, "Invariably promiscuous diaspora and the politics of commemoration it specifies challenge us to apprehend mutable forms that can redefine the idea of culture through a reconciliation with movement and complex, dynamic variation." Gilroy regards the Black Atlantic and its experience of displacement and "unashamedly hybrid character" as latent forms of strength "capable of conferring insight" instead of threats of a detrimental nature "precipitating anxiety" (1996:22).

As an early African intellectual in the world, Dube was attempting the informative function of self-cultural representation for American audiences, while also establishing his sense of self-location in the world. This was achieved through highlighting the difference of his position as 'self' from the 'other' of the West. His is a travelling text that performs the identity of the African other within the nascent, emerging space of transatlantic cultural dialogue. In this fashion, I suggest that while acknowledging that *A Familiar Talk* is not an account of travel, its distinct situatedness allows for a reading that takes account of its intercultural tendencies. There were, of course, profound limits to what the 'civilised' black African subject could achieve, because of social restrictions back home:

African Americans, widely admired by Zulu students as ex-

emplars of black modernity, advanced divergent and often conflicting images of the Zulu that reflected their own collective ambivalence about Africa at a time when they struggled for their American citizenship rights. Zulu students, upon their return to South Africa, also found a hardened segregationist order that regarded them as subjects, not citizens. The production of negative cross-cultural trans-Atlantic representations of black peoples reinforced and celebrated white supremacy during the high colonial age. (Vinson & Edgar 2007:61)

As a precedent to Dube's travels, I refer to Atkins (1996), who outlines the eighteenth and nineteenth century journeys of African-American sailors to Cape Town. The value of her account lies in his employing the notion of the "Black Atlantic communication network" to describe this set of historical encounters. The notion of a 'network' or, circuits of cultural interchange established through the travels of diasporic black subjects, is central to the focus of this study. By invoking the name of John Dube at a funeral, and his association with Booker T Washington, Thabo Mbeki brings to fruition a process of cultural circulation and interchange the project of colonial modernity that is initiated at the point of Dube's first, youthful departure from the United States. His spectral presence in contemporary Pan-African discourse is both a referent and a point of connection between the subjects and texts under analysis in this study. The "mobile black observers" of black American origin that Atkins (1996:23) speaks of act as precursors to the travelling subjects that we are concerned with here, indeed because of the shared history of the transatlantic slave trade. "[T]he Cape of Good Hope was strategically positioned at the southernmost end of a great commercial and information highway. It carried a flow of news—including sensational rumours foretelling immediate emancipation" (1996:25).

This 'transatlantic flow', as I call it, established the conditions for the journeys of the subjects under study here, and the space in which they could write out of place in a space of otherness. The challenge of being the Other requires a degree of self-effacement that was not always exhibited by the voices brought together here. However, John Dube's ideas transcended

the limits of tribal cultural difference, and he foresaw the need for unity among the colonised before the Pan-African ideas of Marcus Garvey and WEB Du Bois. Marks (1975) and Hughes (2001) have written about the ambiguity of his position in African society; he sought to speak for the cause of the common people, but was also one of the few who had been educated abroad. In addition, he was respected in colonial society as a leader and speaker, engaging white people in lectures throughout the country. In 1914 Dube led a deputation of the SANNC to London, which included Walter Rubasana and Sol Plaatje to protest the 1913 Natives Land Act.² He passionately opposed the Act and wrote: “Why must we, alone of all the peoples of the earth, condemn ourselves to serfdom in order to be permitted to live in our mother-country, while every nondescript from over the sea, be he black or white, is allowed to thrive on the fat of our land, and to erect a home wheresoever (sic) he will?” (Davis 1975:520). I mention this historical event because it also defines Dube’s legacy as a subject resistant to colonial hegemony. Yet he was moulded by the very discourses of imperialism and western civilisation that he sought to surmount. This is one of the ambiguous tensions that this study seeks to explore, in the form of the writings of Davidson Don Tengo (DDT) Jabavu.

* * *

The broad intention of this project is to chart some of the literary, intellectual and cultural connections that exist(ed) between black South African intellectuals and writers, and the experiences of their African-American counterparts in their common movements towards civil liberty, enfranchisement and valorised consciousness. The focus here on the delimited historical period of the years 1913 to 1936 was determined because of the importance of the historical events taking place in the United States, South Africa and the world at the time – and their effects on the peoples of the African diaspora. This includes the onset of the First World War; the imposition of the Native Land Act in South Africa; and the African-American response to the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1936 (Harris 1994; Scott 1993). Such events led to unified black diasporic responses to colonial hegemony, and the invasion, for instance, roused feelings among black people in many parts of the world,

including South Africa, where the war was given prominent attention in the black press. With my particular regional focus, I have sought to explore the cultural and intellectual politics of these diasporic interrelations through the reading of the travels of a South African subject, and the narrative and political formations that constituted themselves around the aura of a black American performer and his wife. The networks of affiliation that they connected to are of particular interest and it is the purpose of this study to trace them as well.

This is undertaken in the form of case studies of texts from several genres, particularly travel writing, fiction and autobiography (with a focus on the diary). Using theories of transatlantic cultural negotiation and transnational cultural configuration as a starting point, conceptualisations that map out, and give context to, the connections between transcontinental black experiences of slavery and subjugation, the project seeks to re-envisage black South African and African-American intellectual discourses in this historical period, reading these texts anew, if you will, while remaining constantly aware of the socio-historical processes within which they are implicated. Following the commitment of other scholars in South Africa, I have intended to move beyond the “almost complete divorce between history and literature” that Couzens (1987:39) would challenge in his writing over two decades ago.

Naturally, the work of these South African and African-American writers must be situated within a broader Pan-African context at this early stage, and there is a need at this preliminary stage to emphasise how these writers, both African-American and South African, identified with and worked within, the Black Atlantic world.

Various black American popular movements were to have a major intellectual and cultural impact on South African black culture during the early twentieth century, and their South African deployments need to be connected to the broader cultural formulation of the African diaspora. The idea of an African diaspora first emerged among Africans and their descendants (Mann 2001:3), and the attempt to give some chronological roots to this movement is important at this preliminary stage of my project, as I begin to unravel the complex web of relations that signifies this moment of a common transatlantic identity. Along with the Negritude movement

and its emphasis on the valorisation of black identity, one is able to see the realisation of this mutuality in the form of the literary Harlem Renaissance of African-American literature, its major poet, Langston Hughes, and his vibrant writings - and various other cultural moments and significations. It is important to realise how they helped to shape black South African discourses that would come two decades after the historical period with which I am concerned (see Nakasa 1996 and Nixon 1994).

There is a danger, however, in merely glossing over these important cultural facts, though at this preliminary stage of my work, such a generalisation might be permitted. Thus, the varying terms of common connection, 'Black Atlantic,' 'Black World,' 'Pan-Africanism,' can be applied and viewed through a South African perspective. (I focus on the theoretical formulations around the subject in the next section of this chapter.) The writers, intellectuals, and their texts to be considered in this project, are illustrative of a conscious attempt to contribute to, circulate and identify with each other.

This study is concerned with travel and the nomadism inherent in the character and historical experience of subjects in the African diaspora. The particular focus, of course, is the traffic of writing between South Africa and United States, encompassing black intellectuals, chiefly, but also including the imagining of diasporic connections. As has been seen in the introductory discussion of John Dube's *A Familiar Talk*, we are concerned with the black diasporic subject's writing out of place, in the space 'between' self and other or, by doing so, the struggle to assert an identity out of place. While this descriptor might connote notions of exile, of the subject forcibly removed from the 'home' space through social and political conditions, the readings and analyses I undertake here are focused on the traveller's experience of writing the 'self' in relation to the 'other' in a space of uncertainty and instability. This act of 'writing between' takes place within and outside an uncertain space of alterity, located in the context of the interconnections between colonised peoples across the Atlantic world - and those both imagined and 'real' (the latter, of course, in the form of autobiography). Here, the subject that is writing means to confirm, identify the certainties of 'the Self' in the cultural identity and encounter with 'the Other'. Of course, the politics of diasporic solidarity inform the reading of difference and otherness in this relationship and in this study.

I have used the term 'writing between' throughout this discussion in a provisional sense, because I am attempting to define a theoretical space that describes the psychic condition of the travelling subjects and their texts under analysis here. The literature on travel and the condition of the nomadic subject is extensive. The tendency in Western and colonial travel writing is for the travelling subject to be constantly engaged in an act of self-location and conscious of distance from 'the Other' through the accentuation of difference. The struggle to assert an identity out of place is inherent in the ways that DDT Jabavu, Ethelreda Lewis (through imagining the Other in idealised form) and Eslanda Goode Robeson, write their experiences of imagining and engaging difference. 'Writing between' indicates the liminality of subject present in a state of difference (engaged through the act of travel) but never being able to fully transgress the very boundaries of that difference. The 'between' location that I explore here describes the position of 'self' from which these three writers in very different cultural spaces, connect to the subjectivities and historical interstices of the African diaspora.

Points of interconnection indicate possibilities for interchange, yet the failure to negotiate otherness in all three cases defines the connection between them on a thematic level. The trauma of exile, of geographical displacement with a degree of permanency, is not present here. I mean to explore the literal and linguistic foreignness indicated in the ways in which the three writers have engaged the similarities that they find in the places to which they travel – because of the connections of transnational cultures expressed through diaspora. The key question is, then: In what ways do the writers under study respond to the South African and American spaces in which they find themselves, and how do they express an emotional and intellectual sense of sameness and otherness? This might be described as the politics of diasporic identification. 'Writing between' is a useful site for exploring the tensions between both, and asking questions about identity that lie within the realm of the unstable and the peripatetic.

By its very nature, and throughout a teeming range of motifs, complications, periods of history and debates about canonicity, in this study I have attempted to negotiate the tensions, and spaces between, historical contexts. Throughout the ensuing discussion I locate each text within its socio-historical context, and in the present and presence of this contextualising, I

attempt to closely read, critically engage through literary-analytical methods. The task of this introductory chapter is to connect the methods of this study, which in their purpose have been to uncover the voices of those seemingly disregarded by mainstream scholarship, placing them in relation to current critical and theoretical debates, and forms of postcolonial analysis.

Part of this logic has been to engage those discourses and identities that might not fit with current liberal-ideological and politically correct forms of thinking, or have been disregarded by scholars more concerned with constituting narratives of those significant figures who were directly engaged historically in political and social change. The clearest example of this intention would be the consideration of the writing of Lewis in this thesis, whose liberal-segregationist ideas are racist when considered in relation to the present and, of course, their congruity in Jabavu's initial approval of segregation as the only means in the 1920s and 30s for ensuring some modicum of rights for black Africans. However, scholars continue to write about issues of race identity and racism in all of its forms, making the consideration of Ethelreda Lewis's novel particularly relevant. For Jabavu, resistance would be attenuated and reserved for later on, in the struggle for political will in a democratic future. This was in the spirit of compromise and with little else possible in the way of options in his mind at that point in South Africa's history when the forces of colonial suppression were gathering momentum. Of course, none of these individuals are marginalised, or part of the subaltern. They, including Robeson, are those who in some fashion were connected to significant political events, both in the United States and South Africa, and that I have mentioned already. They were also unusual, if not innovative, for their time. While their ideologies were compromised, imperfect, problematic, they still displayed a commitment to social justice and the improvement of the lot of the disadvantaged in their respective societies.

The range of social interrelations of which I have spoken connect Robeson, Lewis and Jabavu in several ways, be they coincidental or intentional. The connection between Jabavu and Lewis, or what I would call a 'network of affiliation', is indicated in historical evidence: according to the Historical Papers collections of the Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, this would include their mutual correspondence with the trade unionists Margaret and William Ballinger; Lewis's letters to the conservative

novelist Sarah Gertrude Millin where we also find several important historical figures; and, their work as members of the Joint Council of Europeans and Africans (1924-1954). Jabavu and Lewis would have been aware of one another; Lewis imagines someone like Eslanda Robeson's husband; and Jabavu would have been living in Alice and working at Fort Hare around the time of Robeson's visit (see Anthony 2006). This seemingly disparate accumulation of voices are brought together in this study for the purpose of engaging contemporary diaspora theory and exploring the notion of 'writing between' in relation to texts that often challenge the meaning of 'the literary' and the conventions of genre.

The conceptual struggle here is between history and theory, text and context. This is laid against the many conceptions of interconnection, what many theorists (as we shall see in the ensuing discussion) call 'networks' or channels of interrelatedness. These networks are defined and conceptualised through the historical facts of the travels of such writers as the ones under consideration here. The 'between' state of the travel writer is implicit in the formation of these intercultural and transnational flows of knowledge and cultural production. I am concerned, then, with how travelling subjects within the diaspora respond to the instability of writing between cultures while struggling to assert the stability of their own identities.

In the second and third chapters of this study, the focus is on the political writings, pamphlets and autobiographical works of Jabavu. His 1913 journey to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in the United States is recorded in his diary and will be considered within the context of various journeys taken by black South Africans to engage with the African-American cultural space. The intention in Chapter 2 will be to locate his work within the transatlantic discursive networks of the Black Atlantic, while focusing on his cosmopolitanism and worldliness. This contextualisation is important because it establishes the trajectory of method and means that I employ in the consideration of the travelling texts in this thesis. In Chapter 3, having contextualised Jabavu and this writing, I return to his youthful diary and consider the performance of identity and his self-fashioning as a Victorian gentleman, for the curiosity and fascination of African-American audiences in 1913. In the fourth chapter I revisit Ethelreda Lewis's novel, *Wild Deer*, a fictional travel account of a black American man visiting South Africa

in the 1920's. I do so as a response to reductive formulations of African diasporic relations such as the 'Black World' that suggests that only black subjects may construct, people and reflect upon such history. They ignore the full possibility of reconceptualising race and cultural identity in relation to notions of transnational cultural interchange. Lastly, in the fifth chapter, I consider Eslanda Robeson's account of her visit to the African continent as an ethnographer in 1936, with a focus on her time spent in South Africa. The concern there is with the writer's imagination as a key to the representation of the Other, with the distance of the anthropologist implicit in such an engagement.

The use of the fictional and autobiographical travel narratives helps to establish a form of shared, mutually engaging discourse, emphasizing the sense of connection and transnational identification between seemingly disparate black communities. While several writers are to be investigated, the body of texts to be analysed will be read within the common theme of black (and in the case of Lewis, white) intellectuals and authors writing from, to, and outside of, South Africa and the United States.

In sum, these four chapters – intended as engagements with current debates over postcoloniality, diaspora theory, cultural studies and interest in black intellectual histories in South Africa (an issue taken up further in the concluding chapter) through close reading of several illustrative texts – are meant to explore new ways in which the dynamics of travel and the imagining of it were set out in the first forty years of the twentieth century. The concluding essay places my research within the context of post-apartheid attempt to 'refigure the archive' after the hegemony of apartheid. Thus, new forms of memory and formerly marginalised discourses of knowledge are interrogated and devised through the practice of historiography.

My aim is to reorient the study of the nomadism inherent in diaspora writing, as indicated in the intellectual and cultural traffic between the black Americans in the United States and South Africans, away from the dominant focus of Europe and the Americas, to include voices whose writing has not been considered closely – apart from the accounts of historians concerned to mention such individuals in a historiographical context. Writing an identity out of place, in the unstable location between worlds (as seen in the writing of exile), is by no means an original conception of writing as nomadism

and travel as imagining. Rather, as I have said throughout, I am concerned to read current theory in relation to writings little considered – becoming the dust of the archive or subject to the distaste and forgetting of political correctness.

* * *

At this juncture it would be prudent to define the African diaspora as a starting point for the purposes of this study and to briefly survey the literature and the theoretical interventions that form the basis of what is being considered in this study. As one author suggests:

The modern African diaspora, at its core, consists of the millions of peoples of African descent living in various societies who are united by a past based significantly but not exclusively upon ‘racial’ oppression and the struggles against it and who, despite the cultural variations and political and other divisions among them, share an emotional bond with one another and their ancestral continent and who also, regardless of their location face broadly similar problems in constructing and realising themselves. (Palmer 2000:30)

It is the purpose of this study to interrogate the different evocations of the “emotional bond” expressed between African diasporic subjects on both sides of the Atlantic. However, the inclusion of a white liberal segregationist’s imagining of an African-American musician in South Africa is intended to challenge the reductive argument that disregards certain voices on the basis of race because of a history of oppression. The common theme binding these texts, apart from their connections to the African diaspora, historically and culturally, is that they are all forms of texts in transit, or travel writing. I am concerned with the position from which these subjects write, or what I have called ‘writing between’ and the struggle to assert an identity out of place.

Mary Louise Pratt (1986:160) argues that because travel writing has never become “fully professionalized or ‘disciplined,’ [it] is one of the most

polyphonous of genres,” and thus it illustrates how “ideology works through proliferation as well as containment of meaning”.

My work considers the “emotional bond” between peoples of the African diaspora and the “ancestral continent” (Palmer 2000:30). In varying ways, though black South African writers inhabited local discourses and histories, they also produced in what is called the ‘Black World’ by St. Clair Drake (1982). This redefinition, in both cultural and historical terms, to include non-coastal regions and parts of Africa not involved in the transatlantic slave trade, such as Johannesburg, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape (Kemp 1997), is contiguous with comparable postcolonial approaches that attempt to define these relations on such terms as Robert Young’s (2001) “Tri-Continental.” While much work of this nature has been conducted with relation to cross-cultural migratory negotiation and South African historiography, I attempt individual criticism of the texts considered. Leon de Kock gestures towards the resolution of the impasse of the tension between the practice of historiography and literary studies, arguing for a dynamic interdisciplinary space in which the literary and historical can effectively engage together:

[T]here has been little systematic attempt either by historians [...] or literary-cultural scholars, to read what is thought of as the broader historical record as a cultural construct, although significant advances in this direction have been made in recent work by historians, cultural anthropologists and postcolonial critics. (1996:6)

My work seeks to mediate effectively between historiography and literary scholarship, attending to the re-reading of primary texts and historical accounts in new and theoretically invigorated ways and I refer later to the interdisciplinary methodology of literary historian Ian Baucom in this discussion. Such analyses occur within the context of diaspora studies, and as Clifford (1997:249-250) suggests, “the transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland. [...] Decentred, lateral connections may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return.”

More broadly, the set of interconnected cultural relations has been called, inter alia, the 'Black Atlantic'³ (Gilroy 1993b), the 'Black World' (Drake 1982), or the Pan-African diaspora (Adams 2003; Geiss 1974). As Gilroy sets out, "the Black Atlantic can be defined, on one level, through [a] desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity. These desires [...] have always sat uneasily alongside the strategic choices forced on black movements and individuals embedded in national and political cultures and nation-states in America, the Caribbean, and Europe. (Gilroy 1993b:19). The dust jacket of the same book reads, "there is a culture that is not specifically African, American, Caribbean, or British, but all of these at once; a black Atlantic culture whose themes and techniques transcend ethnicity and nationality to produce something new and, until now, unremarked" (Gilroy 1993b). *The Black Atlantic* is, in a sense, the culmination in thinking of the several conceptions mentioned above of African diasporic identity across a multitude of black national spaces and brings together disparate voices under a single conceptual unit that acknowledges the complexity and diversity of the cultural formation, but provides the means for the analysis of diasporic intercultural enmeshments. Residing "in but not necessarily of the modern, Western world" (Gilroy 1993a:120) and possessing what Gilroy calls a "striking doubleness," black Atlantic peoples share more than a common history of suffering under slavery: an ambivalent perception of modernity and Western conceptions of progress. This is indicated, for example, in the thinking of John Dube whose presence begins this chapter. Like Du Bois, he at once finds value in the liberal-humanist and intellectual value of Western culture, but rejects its dehumanising impulses – in this, he valorises the traditions of his own, Zulu, culture, finding certainty and security in its communitarian emphasis.

I am attempting to imagine such a rich polyphony of voices to be found in the black Atlantic world [see Pettinger 1998 (ed.)], as they are to be embodied in my thesis, within a distinctly transnational theoretical space, concomitantly aware of the currents and heritage of postcolonial theory, its associated writings and the present global state of culture which signifies the moment of postmodernity (Appadurai 1996). Central to Gilroy's work and contemporary writing generally is a transnational conception of history

in the humanities and social sciences. As Chrisman (2003:73) suggests, this was fashionable in the 1990s and part of the valorisation of the hybrid in cultural theory and history. The certainties and facts of nationalism were being brought into question with the conceptualising of culture by such authors as Gilroy as unstable or, in transit. This is expressed efficiently by Thelen (1999:967) who in his comments on the transnational conception of history sets out to “explore how people and ideas and institutions and cultures moved above, below, through, and around, as well as within, the nation-state, to investigate how well national borders contained or explained how people experienced history.” “[T]he study of nationalism [...] ha[d] been startlingly transformed – in method, scale, sophistication and sheer quantity” (Anderson 1983:xii) in this nascent, transnational vision of culture and history.

I shall begin, firstly, by referring to those works that gesture towards a form of ‘Black Atlantic’ exchange between diasporic experiences of slavery, servitude and freedom. The work of Tim Couzens is of fundamental importance to this trend. Whether in several journal articles and books, and particularly, his article on transatlantic black connections and Johannesburg in the years 1918 to 1936 (Couzens 1985), Couzens was acutely aware of the transatlantic processes which signify a shared history, a common cultural connection, between diasporic voices and identities. It is in this work that I found an important starting point for my own preoccupation with this profoundly dialogic process of cultural engagement, and coupled with Beinart and Bundy’s (1987) research on millennial movements in the eastern Cape, where one finds references to the “American saviours” of the local black majority, the notion of cultural interchange began to circulate, though in a very preliminary sense. In this way, James T Campbell’s (1995) work on the American Methodist Church Movement in South Africa during the time is also important in stressing the predominantly religious imperatives behind many of the cultural encounters and gives substance to my claims for a transnational process of cultural engagement. It is also highly sophisticated in its account of this transatlantic mode of cultural exchange.

Secondly, it is necessary to refer to those works that do establish links, to some extent, between South Africa, the United States and the African diaspora, but focus on the figure of the black intellectual and are vital

to my concerns in terms of establishing a sense of context and reference. Higgs' (1997) account of the life of DDT Jabavu is significant in its scope and provision of historical information about Jabavu's life and socio-historical moment, and it embraces, to some extent, a close reading of his intellectual work, without, however, paying close attention to the 1913 diary. However, Attwell's work (2005) on black South African intellectual literary histories represents a major contribution to this area of study and his literary-historical method is important for my work in the way that he traces such histories and efficiently engages texts. Additionally, Stephen Gish's (2000) biographical account of the life of Alfred Bitini Xuma is also useful in establishing the socio-historical context in which Jabavu was writing and the common nature of the journey to the United States which both undertook.

There are a number of writers who have begun to engage directly with the interconnections between black South African and African-American writing. Jacobs (1989) was one of the first scholars to establish a literary sense of cultural connection through music between African-Americans and black South Africans, while Masilela (1996) has manifestly located South African black intellectual voices within the cross-currents of interchange and diasporic meaning. However, it is the doctoral work of Choonoo (1983), who examines the interrelations between black autobiography in South Africa and the United States, and Kemp (1997), which so clearly piqued my interest in this area of study. Kemp has focused on the deployment of the sign of the American Negro in black South African discourses in the early twentieth century. Additionally, George Frederickson's work (1981; 1995) has been concerned with notions of ideology and its shared meaning between African-Americans and black South Africans, and is useful in the broader black intellectual history that it charts; certainly, some of the interconnections that my project seeks to explore are foregrounded here. He draws important comparisons between the South of the United States, the emergence of white supremacy and black resistance to it; and similar anti-colonial and anti-apartheid movements in South Africa. This attuned and culturally sensitive approach is very different from the epigraph from the South African, Maurice Evans's (1915) much earlier study that begins this chapter. I include Evans's work because he was writing during the time period on which this study focuses. He spoke to Booker T Washington and

WEB Du Bois, among others, and read their works. He also attended black American gatherings and conferences, and visited Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes. Evans argues for a racial order in the South that maintains harmony between blacks and whites, but preserves the purity of the races. It is an anti-miscegenation text.

For Evans (1854-1920), whites are the superior race and must display “race dignity” and act with “sympathy and tolerance” towards the weaker, black people. Admirably, he suggests that improving the living conditions for African-Americans in the cities and providing them with decent education would be instrumental in the maintenance of race harmony. It is the duty of whites to prevent miscegenation, and if separation is “to break down before the lusts of the stronger, and results in the demoralization of the weaker...then better destroy the barriers of race” (1915:191).

Evans proposed that the solution to the problem of race was to develop an independent black peasant class in the South, while the segregationist measures in operation in South Africa would not be possible in the South. In owning land, black Americans might escape the “daily dread of exploitation and injustice” (1915:253). However, Evans sees black South Africans in much more condescending terms and feels that they have not reached the level of civilization of African-Americans. It is unclear if he was aware of John Dube’s Ohlange Institute that was close to Gandhi’s Phoenix Settlement. The importance of his study is that it is useful for establishing a sense of the historical context with which this study is preoccupied.

This project will also attempt to make sense of those processes within the context of multi-layered, text-based analyses that begin the process of reading anew. This project represents an attempt at a deeper, sustained sensitivity, in the appreciation and formation of a general intercultural hypothesis, around these South African writings of the ‘Black World’. My thesis consciously positions itself within what some current historical commentaries have seen as the rewriting of the history of the African diaspora in “a number of exciting ways” (Lovejoy & Trotman 2003:1). Kristin Mann refers to the emergence of new dialogues between historians of Africa and the Americas, in that they have recently “discovered one another” and begun to engage in the meaningful sharing of knowledge (2001:3). Such a ‘conversation’ stands as a metaphor for the dialogues that I seek to explore between

African-Americans and South Africans, and these historiographies are invested with an acute critical awareness of the multiple histories, collective identities, and transnational interconnectivities of cultural knowledges and systems of meaning, which have arisen from a past of British imperialism, slave trading and the (il)logic of colonialism (Walvin 2000). Of course, in attempting to discuss the notion of the black subject during the colonial period and its subjection to Empire, one must be aware that any identity is “constructed, and therefore highly variable over space and time” (Morgan & Hawkins 2004:3), responsive to a range of significations and composite of a multitude of minor histories which make up the web of its associations and relations to other cultural groups or nationalities.

One always returns to Gilroy’s work. In his first book, Gilroy (1987) focused on the politics of identity in the United Kingdom, both black and British, and music as a site of anti-hegemonic and anti-capitalist resistance. In *The Black Atlantic* (1993b) he sought to extend his scope to include Britain and the United States. In conceiving of a new way to construct and express the complex interrelations of culture and history that we have already defined, Gilroy distinctly opposed all forms of “ethnic absolutism”, be it “Euro- or Afro-centric”. The concept of the ‘Black Atlantic’ was proposed as the means for “an explicitly transnational and intercultural” (1993b:15) approach to the study of African diasporic cultures. Its value is in the assertion that the brutality of slavery is fundamental to the history of modernity.

Gilroy’s assertion is that movement defines the history of the African diaspora. Identity is conceived as in transit and subject to instability in terms of the uncertainties of nation and place. This nomadism and the theme of travel possess a distinct literal dimension in *The Black Atlantic* indicated in Gilroy’s preoccupation with actual journeys and in specific techniques of travel. The metaphorical level of the circulation of ideas is centred around the corporeal mobility represented by trains and ships: “I have settled on the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol [...]” (1993b:4);

if the memory of slavery and the middle passage represents one form of geographical and cultural dislocation and these touristic journeys to Europe stand for a second, freely chosen

variety, the figure of the Pullman porter and the chronotype of the train [...] exemplify a third and more complex kind of travel experience (1993b:133).

Gilroy's discussion ranges from the work of Martin Delaney and James Baldwin, to the intellectual projects of Du Bois most importantly, and Richard Wright. In recent years, some have criticised *The Black Atlantic* as an incomplete vision. Chrisman (2003) particularly, takes issue with Gilroy's meditations on African nationalisms in relation to European modernity. She sees his vision as disconnected from the facts of history, more concerned with the vagaries of theory fashionable at the time of his writing: "[Gilroy's] project subscribes to a decidedly mystical ideology and a transcendental notion of blackness that retains the very ethnicism for which he castigates Afrocentric nationalism" (2003:75). His approach, according to her, is limited by its absolutism and is anti-dialogic: "'The Black Atlantic' becomes, despite its immense potential, an exclusive club-liner, populated by 'mandarins' and 'masses' hand-picked by Gilroy, bound for death" (2003:75). Chrisman's indictment of Gilroy's work is predicated, chiefly, on the claim that, in his rejection of black essentialism and Third World nationalisms, he affirms the hegemony of institutional privilege in the academy that disregards threats to the certainties of its own practices. There is value to be found, she suggests, in Gilroy's critique of Afrocentrism, though he does not focus enough on its utopian impulses.

Gilroy conceives of black diasporic identity in terms of the triangular relationship between the continents of Africa, Europe and the Americas. This transnational cultural-political formation is exemplified in his case studies of black music in *The Black Atlantic* and they provide fascinating insights into the emotional and historic bonds between dispersed peoples across colonial spaces. His abiding focus is on Europe as a space of liberation for blacks from the New World exemplified, for instance, in the education of WEB Du Bois in Germany. There is an unfortunate privileging of the North in his work, and a forgetfulness surrounding the experiences of black Africans in Europe. Chrisman (2003:80) continues, "Slavery is consistently accorded a primacy which colonialism is not. Slavery becomes the prime shaper of black identity and culture and also takes primacy as the structural

or ontological deconstructor of Enlightenment modernity.” She sees only the ‘death-drive’ within black cultures that she feels is Gilroy’s priority.

We must consider, of course, the position from which Gilroy was writing, remembering the value of his theoretical formulations for this study. However, his disregard for Africa limits its applicability. The value of its presence here is more for the purpose of establishing the theoretical space from which this study can seek to envisage new forms of interrelation between diasporic and non-diasporic subjects engaged in the interpolation of transnational identities. Important is the South African academic Ntongela Masilela’s response to Gilroy’s conceptual-theoretical architecture: “[i]n a deeply saddening way, *The Black Atlantic* expresses an unremitting disdainfulness for Africa, for things African. [...] In these refusals the book is reflective of late European modernist experience [...]” (Masilela 1996:89). We need to be aware of the specific expression of African modernity by the New African intelligentsia in South Africa, who established very distinctive transatlantic connections (especially with African-Americans, and hence the focus of this project) from those explored by Gilroy (Attwell 1999:68).

For Gruesser (2005), an American scholar, the assessment is very different. Emphasising the postcolonial quality of ‘white’ and ‘black’ American experience and writing, he finds great value in Gilroy’s reading of African-American literature. Gilroy’s focus is on the journeys of black American men to Europe, and Africa to a much lesser degree. Gruesser’s contention is that Gilroy’s formulation “vividly illustrates” (2005:19) the concepts of postcolonial literary theory that can be applied to African-American literary studies, and the value of his work is the bridge he establishes between Anglo-American and American theory. In his study he sets out to illustrate this assertion through the analysis of several texts and celebrates the ‘double’, the hybrid. Campbell (2006) recounts more than two centuries of African American journeys to Africa. The study, called *Middle Passages*, offers a unique perspective on African Americans’ ever-evolving relationship with their ancestral homeland, following a narrative approach to history that is centred on Africa and the individual ways in which black American subjects form their representations of the continent. However, the study has aroused a great deal of comment.

Common to all of these assessments of Gilroy’s work is the position-

ality of the critics themselves and the intellectual institutions and legacies from which they write. The extended account and range of criticism that I provide of *The Black Atlantic* and several other works that surround this transnational cultural formation indicates the variegated nature of the transatlantic theoretical-cultural space itself. These multiple sites of contestation and confirmation of Gilroy's work indicate at some level that my own work be conscious of its location and the imperatives that form its focus. Chiefly concerned with black American and black South African interchange in diaspora history of the first third of the twentieth century, my project identifies Europe and British colonialism as framing the historical conditions themselves. Despite the claims for a transnational, unbounded focus, the site of analysis always demands some claim for the stability of a national, or temporal, positionality. In other words, exploring transatlantic cultural formations is impossible conceptually without considering that subjects originate from a particular national context.

Again, in my work, I argue for a locally aware analysis of the texts, while also critically connecting to the currents of metropolitan theory in a way that does not ignore the peculiarly South African engagement with modernity importantly highlighted by Attwell (2005) and Masilela. In attempting to argue for a way in which these negotiations of culture have operated, I have found great value in Edward Said's ideas on ways in which knowledge travels and is circulated (1983:226-227), because they accent much of my own discussion (as considered in Chapter 2) and provide a useful conceptual framework for establishing the interrelations between travelling texts and historical contexts. Monika Fludernik (2003:xi) refers to Vijay Mishra's (1996) "extremely evocative" term of the "diasporic imaginary," a conceptual location in which the voices of, amongst others, the Pan-African diaspora, have created a "landscape of dream and fantasy that answers to their desires [...] stocked with a variety of perhaps contradictory landmarks and that, when dreams of a diasporic identity congeal, they sometimes do so around some of these landmarks" (2003:xi). This complex range of metaphors, of mental landmarks around which several meanings aggregate, is extremely useful in beginning to argue for the way in which certain cultural significations become commonly understood and shared. However, this "imaginary", with its "landmarks", lacks materiality, though I shall return to it at the conclu-

sion of the study. At this stage I need to offer a more grounded sense of the nature of transatlantic conversations.

A valuable theoretical explanation for the circulation of cultural knowledges, is to be found in the work of the cultural geographer, Alan Lester (2001), who argues for the following conceptualisation of an imperial discursive network, as

[...] British colonial discourses were made and remade, rather than simply transferred or imposed, through the ‘geographies of connection’ between Britain and settler colonies. Colonial and metropolitan sites were connected most obviously through material flows of capital, commodities and labour. By the late eighteenth century, British material culture was already located within intensively developed circuits connecting Western Europe, Africa, Asia and South America. (Lester 2001:5-6).

It is in this rich web of associations, mutually-implicated histories and moments of nascent connection that can be found the rationale, a means for the establishing of the links between disparate South African intellectual discourses, and their entanglements with the imperial authority signified by Britain and its colonised peoples, and the African-Americans with whom they engaged and who mutually wrote about them. This is apparent, as it was in my earlier consideration of Dube’s writing. Thus, I argue for the rich transnational circuits of culture in which the texts I am going to study are located and functioned. Stefan Helgesson (2000), for instance, argues that this is one of a profusion of ‘Black Atlantics,’ multitudinously wrought, heterogeneously inscribed and conceived, mutually engaging with one another in countless intercultural dialogues of anti-colonial resistance and the realisation of a postcolonial state of enfranchisement. Lester goes on to refer to the “nodal points holding [the] expanded imperial web and its extra-imperial trading partners together” (2001:6). This lattice-like association of colonial positions, again, provides a useful conceptual instrument for arguing for the complex system of cross-cultural entanglements that constitute the sharing of discourses between African-American and South African writers and

intellectuals. The idea of “nodal points” is invaluable and also gestures towards a sense of geographical specificity. It is important in conceptualising locations on the colonial map. These spaces materially signify a kind of coalescing of various discursive articulations of colonial culture and identity, places that exist in relation to and circulate with other metropolitan and colonial spaces. They are “landmarks” in the diasporic imaginary, as Fludernik (2003) calls them, the cities to which colonised subjects flock in the pursuit of social mobility and in which the Marxist ideal of an urban proletarian revolution was to emerge (see Young 2001:159-181).

There is also Isabel Hofmeyr’s idea of a “Protestant Atlantic” in which the meanings of the text circulated.

In such reading practices, the text becomes a “web” stretched across the Protestant Atlantic, which registers and reverberates with the inflections of its different audiences. [...] [I]n the “echo chamber” of the Protestant Atlantic, readers across the entire zone became accustomed to see it as a text with an inbuilt form of international address made possible by the accumulation of local inflections garnered in the transnational networks of the text [...] [which] promote[s] surprising forms of convergence in which different textual practices came to “discover” and resemble each other. (2004:231-232)

The idea of a transnational “echo chamber” best connects the discourses (writings) of the local intellectual to that of the wider diaspora, and helps to ground what I have claimed thus far about the nature of the shared identity between African-American and South African intellectuals. The word “echo” suggests a reverberating discourse which is suitably dialogic in its imagining, while Hofmeyr is subtle in her suggestion of the minutiae of possibilities which constitute the interaction between “local inflections” and “transnational networks” which embody the location of the text in the currents of colonial history. The idea of “convergence” also hints at how the sharing of alternate, yet commonly unified discourses, is conducive to the construction of new forms of knowledge that reflect upon the imperial project and the resourcefulness of the colonised subject through the syncretic appropriation

of Christian religious forms and practices.

As has been shown in this brief discussion so far, bringing together such a variety of theoretical ideas will lead to the realisation of a composite theoretical discourse that is underpinned by an awareness of the historical relationships engendered through colonialism and the textualities to be considered which they characterise and signify. The transnational, then, signifies a rich intercultural space, theorised of course (see Hannerz 1996) with a focus on the ways in which many identities, both national and cultural, are able to converge. This is due, as I have said, to a rich history of international migration, the transatlantic slave trade, and the subsequent emergence of the hybrid qualities of contemporary identity. No longer caught within the postcolonial theoretical imagination concerned chiefly with margins and centres, the transnational acts as an important step towards realising a social reality which privileges no group in the history of colonial relationships, and where the dichotomies and polarities of master and slave are rejected. Of course, this is a recent theoretical intervention, and can be brought to bear on both historical readings (which I have shown to be emerging in that work anyway) and the texts I am going to be concerned with in this project.

In this, the selection of the texts of writers for analysis constitutes a very important issue. I realise that I am engaging, in a sense, in the rewriting of the literary history of the transatlantic diaspora through the analysis of its voices. This is tantamount to the construction of an archive, one that is to be reshaped and given new meaning by my research. This dynamic is suggestive of the move towards the evolving of an account that is critically aware of the many histories that constitute any narrative of the Black Atlantic. In the very selection of texts, I am “refiguring” the space within which such knowledges are understood (see Hamilton et al 2002), constructing a new archive, if you will, and I turn to that new form of archiving at the conclusion of this study.

I move now to the work of Ian Baucom, whom I have mentioned already in the discussion and whose negotiation of historiographical and literary analytical methods has fundamentally informed my contextualising and analysis of texts in this study. In his major study, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (2005), Baucom focuses on a particular historical event, what I will call the ‘Zong incident’. In Sep-

tember 1781 the captain of that ship ordered 133 slaves acquired from the West African coast to be thrown overboard so that a fraudulent claim might be lodged in Liverpool for the lost 'cargo'.

Apart from a focus on the historical context of the height of the transatlantic slave trade, Baucom effectively melds together the work of important social and cultural theorists in his analysis, and engages in a complex form of assemblage of texts. He sets out to form a kind of "counterarchive", one that "over the past two hundred years, has collected itself around this piece of writing [his study] and the event whose history it attempts to write" (2005:4). He brings together a disparate range of texts; it is a "variegated [...and] convoluted assortment" (2005:4), ranging from the formal to the informal, the imagined, theoretical and a multitude of other forms of life writing. All are connected to the tragic event around which the study centres its concerns.

The great value of the work is also its use of social and cultural theory, and the conclusions that Baucom comes to through the application of the work of such theorists as Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida suggest that the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade lies not only in the extent of the violation of human rights and the systematic destruction of African cultures, but also in its far-reaching pronouncement on the history of modern capital and modernity. This is what Baucom calls in relation to the Zong incident, "a type of interest-bearing money [...] the reserve deposits of a loosely organized, decentered, but vast trans-Atlantic banking system: deposits made at the moment of sale and instantly reconverted into short-term bonds" (2005:61). In his work, Baucom focuses on the commercial aspects of the slave trade and the impact of the European colonial enterprise on subjugated and enslaved peoples. Thus, what adds to the horror of their dehumanisation is their commodification as objects of financial speculation. As Baucom writes elsewhere, several years before, on the same matter (in what appears to be the prelude to the publication of his project): "[T]he notions of justice and value that emerge from a contemporary politics of black Atlantic remembrance, a politics in which the case of the Zong has once more become a central event, articulate a far more complex understanding of what it means to exchange one thing for another [...]" (2001:63).

The importance of Baucom's work for my own is the method that he

employs in the reconstructing/contextualising and analysis of the texts that gather themselves around the historical events upon which he focuses. In his tracings of events through the analysis of historical documents, the 'trail' of paper becomes instrumental in the reflection upon colonial modernity and imperialism. The use of theory, not simply as disconnected logic or demonstration of intellectual prowess, represents an important form of negotiation of and interpolation of historical events in relation to the global political capitalist economy of the present. The history of the transatlantic slave trade is intertwined with the progression of colonial, Western modernity. The legacy of this historical trauma is reflected not only in processes of capital, new forms of diasporic connection and cultural (re)formations of diasporic peoples, but also in the resonances and presences of material culture and resources that we find in the West today. I am not burdened here by a materialist focus, but am rather intent to bring together the disparate voices that are present in this study with the purposes of engaging new readings of diasporic identity, and attempting to employ Baucom's effective method that mediates between history, theory and textuality.

* * *

Notes

1. According to Dube, the American missionaries arrived in Natal in 1834 and established their first mission and school in 1836. They did so at the height of the conflict between the Zulu empire and the Afrikaner Voortrekkers who had left the British Cape Colony in search of land and independence.
2. See Plaatje's account of the journey in Willan (1996:174-184).
3. Gilroy's original term treats 'Black' in the lower case. I use the term 'Black Atlantic' to encompass a range of ideas on the matter of African diasporic cultures.

Chapter 2

ESTABLISHING TRAJECTORIES: NOMADISM AND THE SPACE OF WORLDLINESS IN THE WRITINGS OF DDT JABAVU

From the time-tables and maps I locate myself exactly [...]
DDT Jabavu,
“A Diary of My Tuskegee Pilgrimage, 1913”

Professor Jabavu, of the South African Native College, has, up to the present, published chiefly in English, but he has also written, in his own language, an account of his travels (*Ihambo*). The newspaper founded by his father, the late Tengo Jabavu, still appears at King William’s Town. S. E. Mqayi (sic)¹ appears to be an extremely prolific writer; his principal work *Ityala lama Wele* (“The Lawsuit of the Twins”) is highly praised by Professor Jabavu.

Alice Werner,
“Some Native Writers in South Africa”

Professor Jabavu accompanied [Aggrey] the eighty-eight miles to East London in a railway compartment reserved for Africans. Aggrey parted with regret from his friend. He remembered always how Jabavu had lent him his thick greatcoat when he went into the colder climate of Umtata; and how, while he was Jabavu’s guest at Lovedale, he had slipped into his room at night to lay an extra rug over his feet. Aggrey never forgot such things.

Edwin W. Smith,
Aggrey of Africa: A Study in Black and White

In “Native Unrest,” an essay from the political collection, *The Segregation Fallacy*, DDT (Davidson Don Tengo) Jabavu writes that “[t]he aboriginal black people of South Africa have not remained unaffected by the general world movement of awakening race-consciousness that is stirring all coloured peoples in Japan, China, Egypt, the United States and the West Indies” (1928:74). At this point in his life he had become disillusioned with the white political authority that had begun to implement the legislation and restrictions that would be the basis for the apartheid system. In 1913, at the time of the passing of the infamous Native Land Act, Jabavu had condoned

its establishment because he saw it as the only way to reconcile the differences between white and black South Africans. This failure of judgement would lead to his rejection by the South African Native National Congress (what would become the African National Congress), which had been formed in 1912 as a black response to colonial hegemony. Such an acquiescent response stands in stark contrast to Jabavu's later thoughts on the unity of formerly colonised peoples that was gathering momentum in the first half of the twentieth century, and that would lead to the independence of India in 1948. This set of contradictions and ambiguities of political position would define Jabavu's career and intellectual legacy.

As I suggested in the introductory chapter, it has been the intention of the present, post-apartheid dispensation to valorise the black intellectuals of the past in the interest of celebrating a revered tradition. Jabavu was the son of John Tengo Jabavu (1859-1921), a prominent black leader and journalist who, amongst other things, wrote about the Boer War (Ngcongco 1970) and the racial politics of the late nineteenth century as editor of the first Xhosa language newspaper in South Africa, *Imvo Zabantsundu* ("African Opinion") in 1884 (De Kock 1996; Jabavu 1922; Walshe 1969). In *The Ochre People*, Noni Jabavu writes that her father was not considered a "promising child" and that his younger brother, Dick, was the more intelligent one: "people often used to say, 'Pity Dick is only second-born; has more personality, brains than your *izibulo* [first-born]'" (Jabavu 1963:246). However, as the first-born, DDT Jabavu would have been the child favoured by his father for educational, vocational and social progress.²

While we are unable to establish the real nature of the relationship between father and son, given the distance of time and the closedness that is the private space of African family life, it is clear that something of Jabavu's desire to prove himself at this early stage of his life to the patriarchal energies of social and fatherly acceptance explains something of his bombastic tone in the diary. This is the text in which he would recount his 1913 journey to Booker T Washington's Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama (hereon referred to as "Tuskegee Pilgrimage" when cited in the text), which is the description of his transatlantic journey from Southampton and New York, that we are partly concerned with in this chapter. Apart from that, I also set out here to affirm the place of Jabavu as an important

black intellectual voice of the early twentieth century whose body of writing in Xhosa is substantial and significant, though it is dispersed among the university libraries and archives of southern Africa. (The Tuskegee diary has survived, fortunately, because of the efforts of Catherine Higgs who found it in a broom closet at the Methodist Mission Society archives in London and was responsible for depositing a copy at the University of South Africa's archives.) In this chapter I shall also make reference to the report (1913b)³ that Jabavu wrote for the South African government, a systematic account of the methods of education at Booker T Washington's Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute. There is also his collection of essays, *The Black Problem* (1920), his most significant and sustained collection of political writings—which constituted his “ascendancy” to political life (Higgs 1997:91). *The Black Problem* includes the nostalgic ‘looking back’ on Jabavu's 1913 summer at Tuskegee and his recollections of Washington and his wife, where we find a condensed form of the Tuskegee report and sections from the diary as well.

The diary is a text of youth and does not display the maturity of Jabavu's later political and travel writings (which are this contextualising chapter's chief focus), but the diary is important for the level of its intimacy of engagement with African-American culture and the complexities of performance and the evocation of the position of cultural outsider captured within it. I am interested in Jabavu's account of his first transatlantic journey because it is the precursor to his subsequent travels as a public intellectual. It also possesses an engaging, intimate quality – of course, his earliest travel text.

The Jabavu family exemplified the “missionaries' axiom, that to be Christian was to be civilised, and to be civilised was to be Christian” (Mandela 1994:11). DDT Jabavu was distinctly aware of his African heritage. He “fit very well the model of the ‘New African,’ able to function in two worlds without apparent conflict” (Higgs 1997:3).⁴ Jabavu's illustrious father overshadowed his more ordinary stature in South African society. He was unremarkable in his youth but gained significant prominence later on in life, relying on the reputation of his father to some degree. He is mentioned in passing by a recent black commentator:

Davidson Don Tengo, a Bachelor of Arts graduate from the University of London, was appointed as a lecturer at the newly established Fort Hare [University] and went on to become Professor of Bantu Languages. Outside of the university, he held several leading positions in various political organisations including the Cape Native Voters, the All Africa Convention and the Non-European Movement. Throughout his public life, and like his father, he shied away from the ANC and eschewed confrontational politics. (Ndletyana 2008:43)

It is in Catherine Higgs's words, DDT Jabavu's biographer, that the influence and quality of the man are best captured in retrospect. She writes the Jabavu was critical of the apartheid state of his last years, yet "[t]hough he condemned 'the white people' who 'did not honour their side of the bargain,' he stopped far short of a complete rejection of Western civilisation, and he was equally critical of the often fractious younger generation of black activists who had dismissed him for his own liberalism" (1997:159). And Higgs makes the important point that he should not be rejected because of his politics because he played an important part in the fight for the rights of black South Africans. Jabavu was remembered by some as an archetypal liberal, possessive of a great admiration for British colonial power. This commitment was justified by a Cape liberal franchise based not on race, but on salary and land ownership (Lewsen 1971:79).⁵ While the franchise was not strictly based on race, it was designed to be exclusionary. While Jabavu's non-confrontational stance might seem limiting within the context of subsequent anti-apartheid resistance politics, we must remember that his was a voice at other times frustrated by the sly civilities of colonial power, though throughout his life he espoused a humanistic ethos rooted in egalitarian principles through the mission education that shaped it. This would deeply influence the development of his public identity (Higgs 1997:11).

One of the more vitriolic public attacks against Davidson Jabavu, and his daughter Noni, was to come from the dissident anti-apartheid poet Dennis Brutus, who writes of Jabavu's "sense of fun clownishness—with just the faintest hint of 'Uncle Tom'" (1962:15), describing Noni Jabavu as the "rather revolting [...] 'new un-African' [...] [whose autobiographical writing

is] stilted, artificial and critical in the worst down-the-nose white tradition” (15). Brutus was taught by Jabavu at Fort Hare, and his words evoke some of the negative associations of liberalism that members of the black liberation movement held, though many of its members came from these privileged families. It is true to say that Jabavu was something of an elitist, and his daughter, now “alien” to her ‘own culture’ had become an assimilated member of the British Establishment; or as Brutus saw it. This snobbery, so clearly derided, is evident in Jabavu’s Tuskegee diary.

As I have mentioned, Jabavu remained limited by the constrictive politics (Lewsen 1971) of his late Victorian upbringing; its “rather stiff and constricting [...] ethos” (Attwell 2005:32) being the dominant expressive mode of black intellectual discourse of the period.⁶ Yet Jabavu is also known for his commitment to African scholarship. He attempted to transgress the limits of the privileged position of English in African intellectual discourse, furthering the study of Xhosa and other African languages through his scholarly efforts.⁷ He also fought continuously for the right to education of Africans through a comprehensive oeuvre of political writings. He was to become “one of the early leaders of black South African nationalism” (Peires 1979:162), and his political conviction that black people had the “potential for progress, specifically the attainment of equality in a society [...] He voiced the aspirations of those who sought inclusion in civil society in recognition of their having satisfied the criteria of ‘civilisation’” (Baines 1995:xi).

A particular instance of Jabavu’s more militant stance against colonial authority is indicated in his comments as president of the 1936 All Africa Convention that set out to establish a unified position on the matter of black African rights. He was commenting in response to Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia:

All Africans, as well as all other non-White races of the world have been staggered by the cynical rape by Italy of the last Independent State belonging to indigenous Africans. After hearing a great deal for twenty years about the rights of small nations, self-determination, Christian ideals, the inviolability of treaties, humane warfare, the sacredness of one’s plighted word, the glory of European civilisation, and so forth, the

history of the last eight months have scratched this European veneer and revealed the White savage hidden beneath.⁸

This indicates that Jabavu was not simply a flawed mimic man who blindly accommodated white colonial authority and cultural identity. He was limited by his Victorian sensibilities, but at this point in his life was deeply disenchanted, and we begin to observe a profound decline in the idealism of his youth. He was “a handsome man of fine physique, friendly, good-humoured, tactful and courteous” (Kruger et al 1977:78) and I am sure that his aggressive stance here would have been a real test of his usually reserved sensibilities. While limited by the British gentlemanly sense of fair play, he still identified himself confidently as an African and felt a unique emotional and political bond with other African and colonised people. He observed the savagery inherent in the violence of white colonial practice and began to find it difficult to reconcile his upbringing and ceasing faith in the British Empire. I think that the 1936 All Africa Convention represents the height of his political career as a public intellectual, and from there we observe his “fall from political grace” (Higgs 1997:121) and his failure to adequately respond to the changing political situation in South Africa. It was in 1936 that we find him at his most respected and he would have communicated with white liberals as well, including Margaret Ballinger. Ballinger was an acquaintance of Ethelreda Lewis, who I turn to in chapter four of this study, and Eslanda Robeson (the subject of the fifth chapter) was in South Africa that year to observe the Convention and to make her way through the country under the guise of anthropological research. This exemplifies the ‘networks of affiliation’ that I set out conceptually in the introduction to this study. In addition, Jabavu was not simply bound to the conventions of an arcane Victorian sensibility. He also viewed positively the dynamism inherent in colonial modernity. As he wrote, “The old order changeth; and so we behold today in the drama of the life of the South African Bantu a slow but sure metamorphosis from a primitive conservatism to an aggressive modernism in both political and religious affairs” (Jabavu 1927:110).

John Tengo Jabavu and his son consciously connected with the African diaspora. He attended a Pan-African conference in 1899 in London, meeting individuals from other African countries and Booker T Washing-

ton as well (Geiss 1974:180); another meeting in 1901 with members of the Pan-African Association in London; and the First Universal Races Congress in 1911, where South African racial problems were discussed. The congress attracted individuals from throughout the colonial world. Jabavu's father gave a paper there, arguing that there was much to be admired in Africa's past, and that the indigenous peoples of South Africa were as civilized as the colonisers themselves. The aim of the congress was "to discuss, in the light of science and the modern conscience, the general relations between the peoples of the West and those of the East, between the so-called White and so-called coloured peoples [note the diminutive form of the word "coloured"], with a view to encouraging between them a fuller understanding and a heartier consideration" (Spiller 1911:v). DDT Jabavu had attended a 1909 event with his father which discussed matters of race and the rights of colonised peoples, and it is clear how crucial this was for his intellectual development, given that the race conference was such a rich space through which to disseminate Pan-African ideas. As such, the network of interrelations (between diasporic subjects) for which I shall argue presently is manifestly evident here; a polyphony of voices brought together in an act of transatlantic dialogue.

There is something beguiling in mission-educated black elite class and the "subtle glamour of the Lovedale environment" which Jabavu describes (1922:14-15). Its exclusivity and ethos is echoed by his daughter Noni: "When my uncles and aunts, and even older Lovedalians, talk about [Lovedale], they generate an atmosphere that reminds us of a similar one in England among people linked by an old school tie" (1963:28). One immediately senses both the veneration for the place, the sense of tradition that it inculcated, and its elite location in the black society of the time. It was a mark of prestige to be educated there. DDT Jabavu was to become "Lovedale's closest African friend and adviser [...and] resented and fought the ethnicity [tribal consciousness] which threatened his local base" (Peires 1979:162).

As Noni Jabavu mentions: "[A]ll my elders were part of the net of people linked by professions, business, blood, and for many of them Lovedale was the *alma mater*, the cradle where they had shared a social and political background inherited from earlier generations of Bokwes, Jabavus, Maki-

wanes and others – tens, scores, hundreds, now thousands” (1963:21). These familial interconnections were themselves to form part of the wider relations between Africans of the diaspora located throughout the colonial world and in the United States. It is this complex layer of Lovedale history and the generations who passed through it that Mbeki is invoking in his speeches. This is best captured in Noni Jabavu’s reference to “the net of people linked” and this metaphor of linkage is what stands at the heart of the claims of this chapter; that people from local spaces could be intertwined both with their familiars and with the wider world. We also sense how the Lovedale school place tried to emulate the traditions, values and practices of the English public school, and how this heritage would dramatically influence the opinions and political voice of DDT Jabavu.

His education after Lovedale certainly substantiates that claim. In 1903, Jabavu was sent, firstly, to the African Training Institute at the Welsh resort town of Colwyn Bay (see Chadwick 1903). The training was partly spiritual, educational and was committed to the civilising and Christianising of young Africans. Jabavu doubtless met Africans of other nations there, which would have done much to develop his awareness of other colonised peoples. He was apprenticed to a local printer, obviously intended, as his father wanted him to follow him in his career footsteps. Black people were not an uncommon sight in Cardiff at the time, where Jabavu had a small room. He was a free man in Wales, as the equality of black people had been established through the Emancipation of slaves (Walvin 2000), and this would have reinforced his belief in the justness of British society. Jabavu was awarded his university matriculation certificate in 1906, and moved to London to complete his education for the next six years. The city had a large black population at the time, and fellow South Africans, Pixley ka Seme and Richard Msimang were studying at Oxford and Somerset respectively (Higgs 1997:19). However, one cannot imagine that London was free of racial tension at the time, a rather romantic notion that is easily dismissed through the words of Jabavu himself. As he says: “[I]n England [...] I was always a social monstrosity to be gazed at everywhere by every mortal [and] I had got brazen to be stared at and learnt to expect it everywhere” (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 31).

Jabavu enjoyed the social environment of London, however, through

sporting activities and his exposure to the wealth of European high culture that the imperial centre offered the individual, though he lacked any social support or a network of friends, and we should acknowledge his resilience. We might even imagine Jabavu as an African *flâneur* (see Figure 5); one of those urbane, mid-nineteenth-century, male urban strollers, who revealed the lives of the bourgeois margins through voyeuristic observation. The German cultural critic and philosopher, Walter Benjamin, was clearly overwhelmed by the city's theatricality, its passion for improvisation and its ironies (1997:169-171) when he wrote of the subject and the streets of metropolitan Paris. (Certainly, the quality of Jabavu's observations of American cities and Tuskegee itself lends substance to such a proposition.) Jabavu, in contrast to these wanderers, is certainly not middle class in economic position within the context of the metropolis, nor does he have the luxury to wander at will, and his roaming is intertwined closely with the need for survival in a foreign space. He is not simply a voyeur onto a variously seductive or repellent external world, but is caught up and enveloped within it, struggling to find a way through it through his education and what must have been a solitary experience.

Jabavu was awarded a BA degree in English Literature from the University of London and used the title proudly throughout his life. Then, in 1912, Jabavu undertook a practical three-month course in business and journalism at Kensington Training College, and then worked for the *Kent Messenger*. He wrote an article for the publication entitled, "Christmas in South Africa and Other Topics." In it he dismissed the myth of a savage Africa and referred to the evils of Leopold of Belgium's Congo Free State, reducing European greed and brutality to an obsession with the desire to "obtain the wealth they are after...their civilisation strangely undergoes a metamorphosis into the most ferocious savagery: witness the Congo atrocities." This is a prescient assertion, suggesting again that at this early point in his life Jabavu claimed common identity with the anti-colonial resistance cause. Through his writing he was also invoking the discourse of European humanitarianism that had publicly railed against the Belgian colony's practices; labelling them as barbaric and a crime against humanity in its lust for native rubber. The article also signifies the reversal of the Conradian paradigm of the savagery of Africa and the shifting of that condition to European civilisation. Jabavu

also wanted to dispel the myth that African people were a “people without a law or god” and Africa as “a jungle with a scantily clad black man, a lion and his ubiquitous snake.” Further, Jabavu argues for the capacity of savagery in all men, suggesting that Africans had easily taken up the civilised game of cricket and that this is the mark of the African subject’s rejection of barbarism to which he had been so closely proximate in the past; and the heroic and admirable quality of his adoption of civilisation. This early text remains vitally important in our examination of Jabavu’s works on the United States, for it establishes, at this youthful time of his life, the trajectory for a political future.

At the end of his education in the United Kingdom and first (1913) voyage to the United States (he would undertake another trip in 1932 to a mission conference, given coverage in a series of articles in Xhosa in the newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, and then published in the single volume, *E-Amerika* [1932a]), Jabavu would return *home* to South Africa, bringing his knowledge gained abroad to bear upon black South African life in socially uplifting ways. His later travels to the Middle East and India (accounted in Xhosa in *E-Jerusalem* [1948] and *E-Indiya nase East Africa* [1951]) are evidence of the fact that he remained ever conscious of the world beyond, within and outside of his local experience. Frequently to be found in Jabavu’s work are transcultural resonances that attest to an open cultural and intellectual acuity, the words from *The Segregation Fallacy* and at the 1936 All Africa Convention evocative of his deepening awareness of the colonial world and its peoples—indeed, Jabavu’s writing could be viewed as one register, though deeply conservative and limited by its accommodating of the colonial system and rejection of Marxism, of the “Tri-Continental” anti-colonial movement that would gain momentum through Lenin’s anti-imperialist writings (Young 2001). This might seem contradictory, but I employ Young’s term here to attempt to place Jabavu’s writings within a broader transnational frame, the conception of which is not limited to a distinctly right or leftist ideology.

The theme of this study is that of texts, contexts and subjects of the diaspora (both real and imagined) in transit, constantly seeking to engage in forms of self-location in relation to Other spaces. It is in Jabavu’s own words that we acquire a sense of the breadth of his international experience and travels:

Umbali lo, ekufeni ewahambile ama-400,000 eemayile efo-
 mini fakhe (fama65 eeminyaka) kuundawo ngeendawo kweli
 lizwe napheseya kolwandle, uya qala ukuya eIndiya, kufa
 iindawo zangaphambili azihambileyo ele kolwandle zife nge-
 cala lentfonalanga zisiyiwa ngezifuko laseKapa. Uwelo lokuy-
 ala (1903) lwafa lolokuya eEngland emfundweni, awathi
 wagqithela eTuskegee, U.S.A. (1912) phambi kokufa ago-
 duke ekuqalekeni kwemfazwe e-nkulu yamaJamani (1914).
 Olwesifini (1928) lolokuya eJerusalem kwingqungquthela
 ngendlela ecanda kula mazwe: England, France, Switzer-
 land, Italy, Egypt, nePalestine. Olwesithathu lwafa lolokuya
 kwingqungquthela eBuffalo, Niagara Falls (U.S.A.) yolutuf-
 ha olungamaKrestu (1931). OlwesiNe (1937) lwentlanganiso
 ePhiladelphia, U.S.A. kwangendlela egqitha emaNgesini. Ol-
 wesihlanu (1949) lolu lwaseIndiya, ngamazifuko asemPuma-
 langa ePhuthukezi eLorenco Marques, eMozarnbiki, eZanzi-
 bar, eDar-es-Salaam (Tanganyika) naseMombasa (Kenya kuye
 eUganda) naseziqithini zeSeychelles neMaldiva ekusingeni
 eGoa naseBombay. (Jabavu 1951:1)

[The author has travelled 400,000 miles in his life (of 65
 years) and has visited many places in this country and over-
 seas. It is his first visit to India, since most of the places he had
 visited before were towards the west, and he travelled along
 the Cape Coast. His first overseas trip was in 1903 when he
 went to study in England He also went to Tuskegee, USA in
 1912 before returning home at the beginning of the German
 war in 1914. His second trip was in 1928 when he attended
 a conference in Jerusalem. On his journey to Jerusalem, he
 went through England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Egypt and
 Palestine. His third trip was in 1931 to Buffalo, Niagara Falls
 - USA where he attended a Christian youth conference. His
 fourth trip went past England in 1937 to Philadelphia, USA
 where he attended a meeting. His fifth trip was in 1949 when
 he visited India. He travelled through the East, through Por-

tuguese Lorenzo Marques, Mozambique, Zanzibar, Dar-es-Salaam (Tanganyika) and Mombasa (Kenya to Uganda) and the islands of Seychelles and Maldives on his way to Goa and Bombay.]⁹

As I argue throughout this chapter, we must also be alert to Jabavu's travelling consciousness rooted in, and aware of, *the world*. Jabavu possessed the political and cultural consciousness of a committed public intellectual with a roving wit not limited by the temporal and physical constraints of his national identity, or the rather moribund and closed-off world of Alice in the Eastern Cape. The attempt, here, is to contextualise Jabavu's place in the world and argue for his cosmopolitan status; this chapter establishes the trajectory, both analytical and thematic, which this study shall follow.

This intellectual's marginalised voice has for too long been subsumed under a reductive legacy of liberal political correctness, and apart from Higgs's important biographical work, has never been considered in any literary critical manner. But refiguring the archive (a subject and term to which I shall return in the concluding essay of this study) of the black intellectual knowledge of South Africa is a significant challenge, and it is the purpose of this chapter to recover Jabavu's crumbling 1913 diary typescript and attempt to locate it within an unstable, emergent 'canon' of reinvigorated cultural capital, that complicates, rather than simplifies, the reforming of South African literary history after apartheid.

Gish (2000:3) in the case study of AB Xuma aptly describes Jabavu's engagement with Tuskegee as "his immersion into the physical and ideological world" of the progressive social mobility embodied in Tuskegee. Given the profound influence on Jabavu of his education abroad, this chapter sets out not only to chart the course of Jabavu's first transatlantic journey, but also to contextualise the Tuskegee diary as text in terms of the wider currents of the African diaspora; thus, our temporal focus remains on all events described in the diary until just before Jabavu's arrival at Tuskegee. Certainly, the consideration of Jabavu's travel diary in this chapter shall serve as one example of his nascent transnational selfhood. Additionally, Jabavu's daughter, Noni, would find her sense of 'home' outside the borders of the country of her birth and marry an Englishman (Jabavu 1960).

Importantly, the knowledge that Jabavu was to acquire throughout his travels was something that was not passively assimilated for, as shall be considered later, he was to critically interpolate and implement it in creative ways in South Africa through critiquing government education policy, protesting enforced segregation and the limits of both on black education. His intellectual oeuvre is preoccupied with black economic and moral progress, richly layered in its grappling with sociopolitical realities (and textually engaging as well). Jabavu was one of those educated “men with a mission in life” (Odendaal 1983:33), one of the black South African mission-educated intelligentsia at the turn of the twentieth century, and he believed that he would have a significant role to play in colonial society. It is clear that such men (as they mostly were) felt that they formed an emerging middle class, separate from the more quotidian concerns of their proletarian counterparts.

As Jabavu put it at a missionary conference in 1920: “[Railway] waiting rooms are made to accommodate the rawest blanketed heathen; and the more decent native has either to use them and annex vermin or to do without shelter in biting wintry weather” (in Bickford-Smith 2004:212). One is able to appreciate the social *distance* that the members of this African elite felt from their plebeian counterparts. David Coplan (1990:67) has argued, “middle class and working class identity are often more a matter of cultural pattern, social aspiration, and self-perception than income or position in the relations of production.” As Xuma concluded:

These people are well educated, civilised, and, above all, cultured. They more fully appreciate the people’s aspirations as well as their limitations because they themselves have a broader outlook and wider experience. [...] They plead the cause of the Bantu with dignity and consideration. They have a sincere and heartfelt sympathy for their backward brother and would like to see him rise up to their own level, at least, in outlook. They voice his legitimate claims and interpret his wishes to the white man intelligently and rationally. (in Campbell 1995:278)

For men such as Jabavu education abroad represented “the safest bridge for

race contact in the present state of race relations in South Africa.”¹⁰ However, the restrictive dynamics of British colonial power in a sense “betrayed” the self-progressive ethos of this black bourgeoisie by way of its hegemonic designs (Bickford-Smith 2004), and this colonial imperative affected creole elites throughout the African, Antipodal and Asian colonies while a common feeling of frustration developed among these populations.¹¹ Because of their vulnerability and frustrated ambitions, Coplan has termed the African middle class “repressed elites,” and being Christian, mission-educated and town-bound, they clearly represented a small minority of the larger African population that they sought to redeem (Coplan 1990:67). No wonder then that black South Africans such as Jabavu began to identify with Booker T Washington’s independent message, for the Cape liberal franchise “was never, in practice, as completely ‘colour-blind’ as it was in theory” (Lewsen 1971: 67).¹²

When the Union of South Africa was established in 1910, bringing together four Afrikaner and British settler colonies whose racial policies had been substantively different, Jabavu noted that, “The Union is thus seen to have been a disaster for the blacks because under a Federation, which was then urged but to no purpose by the Natives, each State would have preserved its traditional policy and no degrading system of uniformity would have been necessary to retard the progressive Cape Colony” (Jabavu 1928:49). The formation of a single nation resulted in the disenfranchisement of black South Africans because white colonial authority was cemented through the unity of the British and the Afrikaners. Despite this, Jabavu strove for racial harmony and equality, arguing that there was the need for the “readjustment of inter-racial relationships in a manner that [would] conduce to mutual confidence and universal good will (sic)” (1928:1). He felt that a constructive engagement between the races would provide the only practical policy for the country’s future. Again, we sense the limits of such an assuaging position, and it would be the discriminative realities of the early twentieth century in South Africa that would lead to the awakening of a transnational consciousness in Jabavu, with his desire to establish intellectual and material connections with other subjugated peoples.¹³

Here, we note Jabavu’s concern and desire to instil unity between the various tribal groups of South Africa as he rails against the onslaught of

the divisive social forces of colonial modernity: “We are *nolens volens* learning and adopting the new and foreign civilisation by the very fact of living in towns. [...] Once we realise the dangers and rocks that lie in our course, our Scylla and Charybdis [...] then it will be possible for our posterity to build successfully on the foundations that we ought to lay to-day in our social life” (155).¹⁴ Jabavu often alludes to the classical Western tradition in his writing, obviously due to his education at Lovedale. From 1916 he was professor of Latin and African Languages at the Fort Hare South African Native College, and began to emerge as one of the first voices of intellectual resistance in the early black liberation cause in South Africa. Unsurprisingly, Jabavu abhorred “Bolshevism and its nihilistic doctrines [that] are enlisting many Natives up-country,” adding that “[s]ocialism of the worst kind is claiming our people” (1920:15). Similarly, he opposed the aggressive militancy of the West Indian political leader, Marcus Garvey¹⁵

whose [Pan African] Black Republican propaganda promises...the expulsion of the white man and his yoke of misrule from their midst; Negro autonomy (“I Afrika mayi buye” – Let Africa be restored to us) with Garvey himself as Lord High Potentate; a Black Star Fleet with powerful black armies bringing salvation, and bags of grain to relieve Africans. This, because of its attractiveness, has made a deep impression on our illiterate people, so that even from backwood hamlets rings the magic motto: “Ama Melika ayeza” (The Americans are coming). (Jabavu 1928:75-76)

Despite his seemingly conservative politics, Jabavu displayed a marked sensitivity towards his countrymen throughout his life and was committed to a better, more democratically determined life for them, though he was avowedly British in his political sensibilities. As a teacher he stated that, “I have always tried to discharge my duties with the consciousness that I am also a missionary with remarkable opportunities to carry on mission work according to the needs of my environment” (Jabavu 1932b:65). Jabavu felt that the demands of his career as a teacher and those of his faith were commensurate with his role as an activist and intellectual—concomitant with the

liberal Christian tradition that was formative of his public identity (De Kock 1996; Higgs 2001). He also held that by virtue of his education, the African teacher was “an agent and pioneer of civilisation in his location” and thus had special responsibilities for the propagation of culture amongst his people (Jabavu 1920:82).

* * *

Let us then briefly consider the map that Jabavu drew for the frontispiece of his account of his second journey to the United States in 1932, *E-Amerika*, to attend the conference of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions in Buffalo, New York (see Figure 3). While it does not illustrate his first, 1913 journey, it is the only one he ever drew of a transatlantic voyage and is accordingly useful for our purposes here. Obviously, it provides a visual representation of that journey and implicitly, the very diasporic connections and imperial networks of affiliation that I have mentioned in the introductory chapter. What I propose is that in treating the map in such a fashion, we may conceive of a schema for the reverberating cadences of discourse that embody the circuitous paths of a network of associations for which I shall presently argue.

As Deleuze and Guattari suggest in their understanding of plotting cultural trajectories in texts through mapping: “What distinguishes a map from a tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. [...] The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (1987:12-13). This is the same with a map like this, because historical conditions change and the fluidity of cultural relations indicated in travel and nomadism gesture towards the transnational possibilities for discourse between cultures.

The creativity inherent in the Deleuzian map could be read, in this stance, in terms of how we imagine the Black Atlantic and Jabavu’s place in it as constantly shifting contestations. According to Deleuze and Guattari, to trace (in our case to form a discursive network of cultural interrelations) is to organise, stabilise, delimit and deactivate the diverse significations of a text. In this sense one must not attempt to rigidly locate the writings of Jabavu within some bounded discursive network, but rather to understand that

they are freely in converse with other currents of the transatlantic diaspora. This imagining as such is as unstable as the identity of the travelling subject, yet we are aware of Jabavu's attempts to find a place for himself within these cross-currents.

Jabavu may be conceived of as an itinerantly conscious, travelling subject. In this sense, that unbounded sensibility is congruent with our reading, which must necessarily concern itself with a form of analysis that destabilises former notions of the specificity of cultural and textual analyses. DDT Jabavu was, along with John Dube (Davis 1975; Dube 1892), Sol Plaatje (Willan 1984), his contemporary AB Xuma, and many other black South Africans (Gish 2000), able to *connect* with the currents of the black diaspora (Gilroy 1993b) through engagement with African-Americans. This occurred, firstly, through their education in the United Kingdom and United States, as they were generally excluded from white secondary and tertiary institutions in South Africa at the time, and secondly, through a number of visits undertaken by black South Africans to investigate African-American methods of education and social organisation. Around 200 black South African students studied in the United States and Britain between 1898 and 1908 (Higgs 1997:17), supported by various churches and given the opportunity to learn both practical and theoretical skills (Geiss 1974:208).

These intellectuals circulated, as I mentioned in the introduction, within what Hofmeyr (2004) has called the "Protestant Atlantic": a range of cultural linkages established through religiosity, moral imperatives and the uplifting of the colonised subject. This led to the dissemination of culture and textuality within a transnational frame. In other words, the sharing of resistance knowledges would become a global process, in which national subjects are engaged in transatlantic conversations, acquiring meaning and circulating it; their discourses concatenating with one other. Thus, I argue for the transcontinental circuit of culture in which Jabavu's texts may be located, read and be seen to operate within. Within this hybrid space Jabavu's diary serves as a manifest literary form of this set of relationships.

At this juncture I invoke Edward Said's notion of "travelling theory," with its "discernible and recurrent pattern" of the flow of ideas (1983:226). Said sets out a clearly-defined process through which the interchange of ideas takes place. Central to this concept is the actual "distance traversed":

the contours, paths along which cultural knowledges flow. On arrival at another location, concepts are resisted, accepted, or critically interpolated by the receiving subject. Hofmeyr's envisioning of the Protestant Atlantic as an "echo chamber" (2004:232) in which the text (here, the diary of Jabavu) reverberates with meaning and whose contexts are multiply-shared, does much to ground this conceptualisation of the discursive flow of transatlantic knowledges. DDT Jabavu's journeys signify the attempt to converse with other cultural knowledges, while this travelling subject seeks to reinforce his own individual and national senses of self and identity through engagement with other cultural contexts. Here, despite its almost abused application, we sense the need to theorise identity in terms of hybridity, creolisation.

Gilroy has suggested that we substitute "placeless imaginings of identity" for the ever-present claims of "soil, roots and territory" and to think about movement as an alternative to the "sedentary poetics of either blood or soil" (2000:111). To reorient theories of identity "toward contingency, indeterminacy and conflict" (2000:128) might seem challenging, but this is an empowering proposition and gives reinvigorated contextuality to Jabavu's travel writings. Instead of the idea of a journey towards "the destination that a completed identity might represent," Gilroy proposes more contingent, transitory linkages, shifting networks and interrelations, that redefine our notion of spatiality and temporality and create "new possibilities and new pleasures" (2000:129). However, geographical and cultural specificity still remain important in our readings of diaspora, and my intention here is to *valorise* the notion of the circulation and movement of cultural knowledges and identities across the Atlantic. We are reading culture through a new frame, acknowledging the instability and uncertainty of difference. In his role as a public intellectual, Jabavu found fulfilment in furthering the limits of his local knowledge to include an awareness of the global, Pan-African diaspora, of which his voice was to become a part.

I find in Said's idea of the intellectual as exile a useful metaphor through which to read Jabavu's intellectual identity, though I am wary of the misuse of such a seductive language. The desire to transcend national boundaries, not to be enervated by the chimera of cultural difference, is an appealing notion, for the ascetic code of willed homelessness is "a good way also for one who wishes to earn a proper love for the world" (Said 1983:7).

For an exile, “habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environment are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally. [...] There is a unique pleasure in this sort of apprehension” (Said 1984:49-55). As Said suggests later in his career:

The pattern that sets the course for the intellectual as outsider is best exemplified by the condition of exile, the state of never being fully adjusted, always feeling outside the chatty, familiar world inhabited by natives. [...] Exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one in your new home or situation”. (1994:39)

This does much to emphasise the relationship of ‘home’ and the places to which Jabavu travelled, both in thought and corporeally, for the “old” and the “new” constitute psychic temporal locations from which he was to draw from in his writings. Within Jabavu’s diary we find complex interplays between the desire for the old educational environment of the United Kingdom and the ‘new’ experience of Tuskegee, while South Africa remains, for Jabavu, something of a psychic location which he employs to *claim* for himself roots which makes traversing other cultural routes a more stable experience; the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ being not mutually exclusive. Of course, Jabavu’s calling his journey to Tuskegee a “pilgrimage” suggests his intention to pay homage to Booker T Washington and Tuskegee, and what these achievements meant for black people in South Africa at the time.

As I have noted, through briefly engaging with the shifting locations of initiating and receiving discursive positions within Said’s travelling theory, any reading of Jabavu’s writings must be continually aware of the reverberating transnational resonances which encompass its discursive formation, and the centrality of Africa in its imagining. As can be seen in Jabavu’s map mentioned earlier (Figure 3), he was acutely aware of the spatial logistics of the transatlantic journey that he undertook. Consider also the choice of

physical locations and cosmopolitan locations indicated on the map; they imply much about the man's cultural sensitivities and intellectual sensibilities.

It is useful, then, to conceive of Lovedale, a "pre-eminent centre for black advancement" (De Kock 1996:62), from where most of Jabavu's writings were published and where he was first educated, and Tuskegee, as what Alan Lester (2001) proposes as *nodal points* within a network of cultural associations.¹⁶ They are in this instance defined through a common experience of the subjection to colonial power: one people suffering under settler racist practices, subjects of the British Empire until 1910 and then of white settler authority; the other emerging from a history of the transatlantic slave trade and still subject in the American South to extreme racism (Walvin 2000). Contained within this discursive network of cultural relations is the suffusion of shared resistance knowledges, marked by expressions of a mutual identity. If we employ Lester's historical-geographical framework, it empowers the function of reading such transatlantic texts as Jabavu's travel diary in innovative and thoroughgoing ways.

By the very act of conceptualising the *flow* of knowledges and narratives thus, the reader is able to clearly conceive of the way in which such discourses *travel*; or are circulated. This is knowledge located in *the world*, belonging to the contingencies of a colonial sociopolitical reality, employed in the interests of enfranchisement. Tuskegee represents an important transnational space, for "Tuskegeens were accustomed to having a sprinkling of international students in their midst, especially those from Africa and the Caribbean" (Gish 2000:30). In this richly diverse context, ideas about a transatlantic diaspora could be shared, formed and disseminated, through the transmission of knowledge through the visiting of colonial interlocutors, eager to absorb the self-uplifting ideology that the Institution and Booker Washington's ideology encouraged. Through this location, ideas were passed on, circulated and shifted unreservedly between national-cultural intellectual, political and social spaces, through the interaction of black subjects.

Thus, one can appreciate the use of linking Lester (2001) and Said's theoretical ideas together. Within the context of the historical relationship being discussed, the "distance traversed" in our model of travelling theory is the transatlantic route which that knowledge takes, while the positions

of initiator and receiver of discourse are constantly shifting, alternating between such discursive nodes as Lovedale and Tuskegee, Hampton and Ohlange, and many other black educational institutions of the time. In other words, there are multiple positions at play here, often conversing through intellectual and textual discourse in complex and multivalent ways. Given that rather unstable range of trajectories, it is vital to make reference to the imperatives of the Deleuzian map.

Nodal points are to be visually sensed in the cities which are which are indicated on Jabavu's map, yet such a map is rather loosely defined. More useful is the map from the frontispiece of biography of James Aggrey; it is more clearly defined in this instance, and we are able to locate Tuskegee, Lovedale and several other metropolitan centres on it (see Figure 4). Both maps do much to establish our sense of the black Atlantic in reality, and the journeys represented through dotted lines in both maps themselves become mental traverses, networks through which knowledge flows. While this rather mechanistic understanding of things might seem to contradict what I have already said about the Deleuzian map, we find in the visual a schema for the trajectories of shared cultural knowledges that prove invaluable in establishing a material sense of the concepts being described. Both the mental and the physical journey are represented here.

* * *

As an autobiographical text, Jabavu's diary connects self-consciously to a European tradition of journal-keeping, evident in the prolixity of detail in Jabavu's diary, an *aide-mémoire* that could be relied upon when "remembrance" had faded [Boswell 1970 (1791):307]. However the diary is also a "register of one's life," where one could contemplate on one's character and the circumstances of experience: "It is very necessary to have our thoughts and actions preserved in a mode not subject to change, if we would have a *fair* and distinct view of our character" (Boswell 1951:330). In contrast to the diary, WEB Du Bois suggests that memoirs or

[a]utobiographies do not form indisputable authorities. They are always incomplete, and often unreliable. Eager as I am to

put down the truth, there are difficulties; memory fails especially in small details, so that it becomes finally but a theory of my life, with much forgotten and misconceived, with valuable testimony but often less than absolutely true, despite my intention to be fair and frank. (1968:12)

As a self-reflective device, Jabavu's diary offers a rich explication of the culture and identity of the African-American, as he unconsciously attempts to locate for himself a place within the transatlantic diaspora. In this instance, there is a complex interplay between the diary's more quotidian concerns and the official report that Jabavu would write for the South African government of the system of education at Tuskegee. Its abridged form is to be found in *The Black Problem*. In one sense, given the *immediacy* with which experience is chronicled in the diary, Jabavu's text remains an invaluable literary and historical resource for our reading of transcultural engagement, the latter historiographical imperative having been fulfilled in Higgs' biographical study. In my literary interpretation of Jabavu's diary, I am more concerned with honing in on the concerns and idiosyncrasies of his *private* lives.

In claiming the shifting space of the traveller for Jabavu and his writings, I have already noted the instability of delineating a fixed identity for the (at times) itinerant subject who is forever shifting between so many national-cultural spaces. Among Jabavu's contemporaries, AB Xuma is described as "African, American and South African" (Gish 2000). It is limiting to fix the black South African intellectual of the period as a national subject, for "every human identity is constructed, historical; every one has its share of false presuppositions, of the errors and inaccuracies that courtesy calls 'myth', religion 'heresy', and science 'magic'" (Appiah 1992:174). Any identity is therefore highly variable over space and time, subject to a range of significations and composite of a multitude of minor histories that make up the web of its associations and relations to other cultural groups or nationalities. In this sense, the inclusion of Appiah's words gestures towards the way in which a writer such as DDT Jabavu is able to create many identities for himself and is not limited by them in any way – he is transnationally *unbound*. Jabavu is able to move through the world by imagining a place for himself in it, while exist-

ing in many temporal locations by way of writing time. By the very process of experiencing what is not 'home,' what is outside of yourself, and then later returning 'home' to a "new...situation" in which "you can never fully arrive", the intellectual is faced with the challenge of mediating between the old and the new, and arriving at a reinvigorated sense of self, while also being aware of the challenge to imagine a new, re-translated voice for one's self.

For AB Xuma, a medical doctor by training and later leader of the African National Congress in South Africa, the writing of his early autobiographical essay, "The Story of My Education," was to be the experiential way through which he could negotiate his own extensive contact with the African-American cultural space (Gish 2000:49-50). Yet it is in Jabavu's work that we find the more sustained, textually-layered engagement with this world, given his educational background in the humanities, one that has been rigorously explored in Higgs' work (1997; 2000; 2001), and without whose invaluable research, this project of the *return* to Jabavu's political and autobiographical texts would have been more challenging.

The biographical research of Higgs on Jabavu, Steven Gish on Xuma (2000), Brian Willan on Plaatje (1984) and Manning Marable on Dube (1976), follow a common methodological trajectory in their examination of the lives of these men. They commence with an imagining of the biographical subject's rural past, and the cultural routes that influenced the emergence of the man. There is, also, the hypotextual referencing to Washington's *Up From Slavery*, an originary text for any successive imagining of Pan-African black liberation; the consideration of the "odyssey" (Gish 2000) or "pilgrimage" embodied in the journey to the South of the United States; and the return to South Africa to transculturally implement these acquired ideas within the local social space, however unconsciously. For Dube, as I mentioned in the introduction) it was his work at Ohlange Institute (Coplan 1990:43; Davis 1975; Gish 2000:22) that saw the deployment of Washingtonian values at such a high profile level in South Africa. Washington's Institute served as an essential cultural referent for other peoples of the African diaspora, and Dube gave the commencement address at Tuskegee in 1897. Ohlange "emulate[ed] Washington's methods" (Gish 2000:22). Tuskegee was operated by blacks only and its curriculum centred on industrial education and the imperative for Africans to develop self-sufficiency as a requirement

for acquiring self-enfranchisement (Jabavu 1920:60). Dube wrote to Washington again on 10 September, 1897, asking Washington if he could use his name publicly to endorse his work in South Africa (Washington 1975:327). They met again in 1910, and it is clear from this web of associations that evidence of a transatlantic dialogue could be seen to be taking place.

* * *

While Jabavu and his father gravitated towards Booker T Washington's more conciliatory stance, they were aware of WEB Du Bois's more earnest message. According to Jabavu, Du Bois felt that Washington "did not represent [his position] and that his politics [were] far too compromising and harmful for [Du Bois's] Northern circumstances, unreservedly as [Du Bois, in Jabavu's opinion] admired [Washington's] philosophy and achievement for the masses" (1920:66). Similarly, in a speech delivered to a mixed audience on "Native political philosophy," Jabavu cited education and agriculture as his aims and the position of Washington as more relevant to him. He went on to describe the philosophies of Garvey and Du Bois as well but, as has been noted already, summarily rejected Garvey and avoided any reference to the possibility of the application of Du Bois' ideas to the southern African context (1920:3). Washington advocated a more conciliatory approach that saw the Negro never needing to aspire to the greater political right to the vote; more concerned with the affairs of his own industry. Washington's message was a powerful one and the man possessed great stature in American society, what with an acceptable politics that American Southerners were eager to fund.

It is important to mention, though, that as early as 1909, Washington was expressing something of the transnational blackness whose concerns remain at the centre of this project:

There is [...] a tie which few white men can understand, which binds the American Negro to the African Negro; which unites the black man of Brazil and the black man of Liberia; which is constantly drawing into closer relations all the scattered African peoples whether they are in the old world or in

the new. There is not only the tie of race, which is strong in any case, but there is the bond of colour, which is especially important in the case of the black man. It is this common badge of colour, for instance, which is responsible for the fact that whatever contributes, in any degree to the progress of the American Negro, contributes to the progress of the African Negro, and to the Negro in South America and the West Indies. When the African Negro succeeds, it helps the American Negro. When the African Negro fails, it hurts the reputation and standing of the Negro in every part of the world. [Washington 1990 (1906):20]

In addition to this, we might do well to apply Du Bois's concept of "double consciousness" to Jabavu's life and writings; the condition through which the African-American, colonised subject experiences the world: "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" [Du Bois 1990 (1906):8]. Du Bois goes on to chart an African-American history of the struggle to overcome this doubleness: "to merge [a] double self into a better and truer self," of efforts to be, "both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face" [1990 (1906):9]. Consider this instance of Jabavu's discourse that passionately rails against the iniquities of segregation, yet note its haughty tone:

[Legally-enforced racial segregation, through the creation of reservations or homelands] is Native oppression often born of race prejudice, here hidden under academic terminology and disguise. It amounts to inviting the aborigines to go out into the wilderness "to see a reed shaken with the wind." Where is this unoccupied land or wilderness to which we are advised to go? Some have suggested the arid wastes of South-West Africa. Why not the Kalahari or the Sahara desert? The bathos of absurdity in argument is touched by those who suggest that the black man must first get himself out of touch

with European influences and institutions in order to be able to build a new and peculiar civilisation and make his contribution to the world of music and invention. Ask if Sir Edward Elgar, Signor Caruso, Herr Mark Hamburg, Monsieur Bleuriot and Mr. Morris must first be cut off from contact with modern civilisation and be exiled to Siberia in order to be able to make their contribution to music and invention. (1928:10-11)

Jabavu's expressive style suggests an incessant desire to demonstrate his civility through writing to a multifarious readership. There is a delightful sense of wit evident here, yet also a deep frustration with what was the historical root of the apartheid homelands policy that was intended to intensify tribal divisions between black South Africans, thus creating conditions more conducive to white minority rule. Jabavu's is a discourse rooted in the world, its speaker aware of and able to deploy much colonial-cultural ephemera in the interests of reinforcing his argument. While Jabavu did not espouse Du Bois's more progressive politics and sadly came to approve of the South African Prime Minister JBM Hertzog's shallow compromises on the segregation issue, we see in the development of Jabavu's texts over time a deeper awareness of the centrality and importance of Africa, and a more intimate connection to its diaspora.

Furthermore, the value evidenced in the reading of a southern African cultural context in relation to an African-American cultural concept suggests a great deal about the intertwining connections of experience that embody the Black Atlantic. Here we observe the complexities of intercultural association and the mutual conception of shared, common history of resistance to white oppression. However, I am cautious in employing the concept of double consciousness, as it is fraught with the inherent problem of what Babacar M'Baye sees as the representation of the relations between African-Americans and Africans by critics predominantly in terms of its "discontinuities, hybridity, and anti-essentialism." Calling this a typically "postmodern" approach limited in its reference to the essentialising characteristics of Afro-centric movements and their expressions of mutual identity with other groups (2003:151), M'Baye demonstrates that in deploying the

notion of “double consciousness,” one is invoking a discourse rooted in Northern constructions of intellectual and political identity. We must be critically aware of the importance of Africa in Black Atlantic studies, gesturing towards alternative ways of reading the intimacies of connection between diasporic black communities; a concern manifest in critiques of Paul Gilroy’s work (Masilela 1996:89). Is this not tantamount to the tactical *essentialising* of African identity in the interests of a more astute, sensitive reading of transculturated textualities?

* * *

DDT Jabavu’s 1913 journey to the United States was to prove to be a singular event in his life: on meeting Jabavu on a tour of South Africa, the African-American Ralph Bunche noted that Jabavu “traded” constantly on his “youthful” journey to Tuskegee (1992:135), constantly extolling on the virtues of African-American culture.¹⁷ Bunche met Jabavu in 1937. In this world, Jabavu would find a seeming idyll dissimilar to the more constricting social conditions that he would return home to in 1914. In reading Jabavu as a traveller, we have already noted his meeting various African diasporic subjects through the conferences that he and his father attended in London, these events proving to be of singular importance towards the man’s burgeoning transatlantic sensibilities. While we are mindful of these developing sensibilities, Jabavu’s was also prone to specious claims. This is suggested in Walshe’s (1969:597) erroneous claim that Jabavu possessed an MA degree from Yale University while Campbell, an important historian of the AME Church, wrote that Jabavu was “Cambridge-educated” (1995:277). These honest errors of fact may stem from Jabavu’s own hyperbolic claims for greatness, indicated in the bombast tone of his Tuskegee diary, and his performed identity (which I explore in the next chapter) as a Victorian gentleman, full of hyperbole.

Jabavu’s initial reasons for visiting Tuskegee were to enjoy a self-actualising experience through the engagement with an alternate, perceived as somewhat utopian, sociocultural environment though, as I have noted, while at Tuskegee, Jabavu received a request from the Native Affairs Minister

of the Union of South Africa to “furnish a full report on the Tuskegee curricular and educational methods, including the elementary, practical and agricultural, with views on their suitability and adaptability to the conditions of the Natives under the Union” (Jabavu 1920:27).¹⁸ The subsequent report was shelved and never had any effect on any official education policy in South Africa, though Jabavu felt that the Tuskegee model had much to offer black South Africans, and we move to a reading of the abridged form of this report later. If anything, Jabavu was to find at Tuskegee an alternative method of education for his proletarian compatriots—in this, he was clearly conscious of his elite education and the status in society that he felt it would bring. Jabavu also linked American Negro achievement to the “generosity of white citizens for their [black] institutions” (1920:62). Jabavu argued that education and an agricultural lifestyle for Africans went hand in hand; industrial and agricultural education would increase productivity and divert the attentions of Africans away from the more radical forms of political leadership that were becoming apparent at the time, such as the Bulhoek massacre in 1921, when 163 black ‘Israelites’, followers of the prophet Enoch Mgijima, were killed in a violent confrontation with white colonial police (see Makobe 1996). Jabavu’s speech, reported in *Imvo Zabantsundu*, at the Aliwal Native Methodist Church in 1923 made this argument clear:

Thus, to give the native a settled purpose, a knowledge to work out that purpose, would free us from such unfortunate happenings as the Bulhoek affair. An illiterate people would always be the prey to foolish and fanatical leadership. More than all else the natives needed a proportion of leaders with well-balanced minds. His own father had said what the natives wanted was firstly education, and second, more education, and thirdly, still more education.¹⁹

Education provided a means for the African to progress beyond the crude cause of fanatical leadership and moreover, “well balanced minds” would by implication seek “a working basis for agreement between the races”; for Jabavu education was the vital alternative to race conflict and, “[n]ot by fighting but by education would the African win redemption.” Jabavu concluded

that the good African was the educated one and that “[t]hinking men and women,” black and white, had common interests.

Thus, it is manifest that the congruence between Washington’s African-American methods and Jabavu’s means and intentions for the education of the black South African would have developed from the latter’s experiences at Tuskegee. Embarking from Southampton for New York on July 2, 1913, Jabavu claimed throughout his boat voyage that he was on a pilgrimage, an ascetic sensibility allusive to Hofmeyr’s claims for the transcontinental circulation of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*’ dissemination.²⁰ Jabavu was dismayed by what he encountered on board:

To my friends I had undertaken to rough it and go ‘Steerage’ (3rd class) rather than lose the pilgrimage. [...] My disillusionment was long and bitter, but I blamed no one and made the utmost of the circumstances. My cabin! what a cabin! Just room enough to turn round. No wash stand, towels etc., as in the [South African] boats. My entire furniture was one life-belt, (in the shape of white canvas bricks with shoulder straps), one straw pillow, a straw mattress and a black blanket (such as we use at home for placing between a saddle and a horse’s back. That’s all! I screw up my courage for the adventure. [...] Cockroaches and rats impertinently run all about the edges of the ceiling.... What a crew! Just the scum and dregs of European capitals washed out by the Balkan War tide as it were, into our boat. They came from Montenegro, Malta, Austria, and Serbia (sic) for the most part. Many Italian women and children wearing the most multi-coloured apparel imaginable. All the colours of the rainbow, almost, would decorate one individual! (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 2-4)

Given his self-perceived station, it is clear Jabavu felt that steerage conditions were far beneath the limits of his dignity and we sense his abject abhorrence at the extent of his exposure to a bare, proletarian life. There is nothing surprising in this reaction, yet it is important to note Jabavu’s awareness of the multinational composition of the passengers that surrounded him, and

his facetious delight in the “colours of the rainbow” of the heterogeneity of material culture and its presences that surround him. This in itself serves to reinforce my argument about Jabavu’s cosmopolitan sensibilities, and his awareness of the political currents and international events that were shaping the world at the beginning of the twentieth century. Symbolically, he is also tracing the journey of other African diasporic subjects. He is an important voice because he is writing the place of a black South African subject within the transnational space of transatlantic migration of peoples of many nationalities to the New World; the value of his work is in the fact that he has chosen to narrate this experience. The shipboard space is an iconic and unstable one. It was the obvious means of conveyance for the peopling of the United States on an unprecedented level. Jabavu is writing from within the immigrant space.

Jabavu made his this journey by means of Quaker funding established through his father’s connections to a Reverend Impey. John Tengo Jabavu attended services regularly at the local church (Jabavu 1922:8) and what is interesting about this association is that it would establish the material connections to London that would make possible the funding for DDT Jabavu’s education and this journey to the United States. As his account of his journey begins: “Origin: Miss Impey, Street, Somerset, England, ___ advice to spend the summer at Tuskegee and obtain an insight into the machinery of Education, organizations of Tuskegee and other centres in the States” (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 1). I introduce the transatlantic/transnational Christian connection now because it is this which initiates Jabavu’s journey and exemplifies the kinds of interconnections that Hofmeyr (2004) speaks of. At this instance we observe the reverberations of historical fact, the interpolation of Christian colonial modernity by colonised subjects in the form of the Jabavu family’s engagement with the Quakers, and the religious networks of affiliation in the form of the Impey family that would have made possible new forms of intercultural engagement, associations and social mobility that Jabavu would engage with at Tuskegee and in his other travels in the United States. Jabavu’s later career indicates the stretch and complexity of these religious affiliations and interconnections of association. The moment of his departure from England also signifies the beginning of an intellectual and political life rooted in Methodist principles, while the Christian

religious connections allowed him the financial resources to experience the world as a free-minded subject, and his shipboard experiences are important, as they are instrumental in his developing worldly consciousness. From this moment, we observe the beginning of his travel-writing career, which will develop later into the important ways in which he would represent and narrate the wider world for a Xhosa language audience.

The Tuskegee diary serves as the precursor to Jabavu's cosmopolitan sensibilities that would develop later in his travel writings published in Xhosa. What also makes the diary valuable is that it is not clouded by a formality of tone that is typical of his published work. The private nature of the diary writing space reveals self-conscious and unconscious moments of self-revelation that are fascinating when considered in relation to the voice of the mature intellectual. When onboard ship Jabavu's imperious affectations sometimes reach a delightful degree of hilarity in the text:

I became supremely and increasingly conscious that the difference between my soundness and sea sickness is purely marginal. What brought me dangerously on the brink of succumbing and collapse was the smell of the sailors' kitchen. [...] So far as I could tell it was a mysterious chemical fusion of roast coffee, with boiling onions, roasted bacon, tobacco smoke, curry, salad oil, green soap and other ingredients all contributing to produce the most objectionable effluvium. Directly the odour reached your nose it seemed to throw the entire abdominal structure into a convulsive upheaval. I believe it is this phenomenon that accounted for sea victims and not so much the rocking of the steamer. My regular defence against it was to keep a handkerchief against my nose on nearing the odious kitchen until I passed it. [...] My argument was: If Mrs. Pankhurst [leader of the suffragettes] can keep alive for 20 days without food and water, surely it ought to be easy for me to exist for 4 days on biscuits, apples and water. ("Tuskegee Pilgrimage" 7-10)

The melodramatic proportions of the speaker's words in the excerpt further

compound this almost burlesque evocation of the affected English gentleman. The prolixity of sensual detail contributes to the reader's fuller sense of the ship's environs, making this text, the diary, a literary one that moves beyond the limits of a diarist's largely chronologic imperatives. Given that the diary represents Jabavu's singular attempt at an introspective aesthetic, we cannot stress enough the importance of the text's location in the Black Atlantic, bringing to the surface another traversing of the Middle Passage, by an African, towards another cultural space, located through diasporic connections – a set of intercultural relations defined through temporality; through history. Jabavu's 'hardships', obviously, do not in any way match the horrific weight of a history of transatlantic slavery, and this journey across the Middle Passage is negotiated through the multinational space of a ship's inner environs, a vessel through which time, history and meaning, in an instance of self-reflexive description and the intimacies of an affected traveller's bourgeois horrors. This is a lonely path to take and Jabavu seems to admire other ship-bound characters, such as the "Madama Italiana," who was averse to the public machinations of a patriarchal-proletarian world:

Specially prominent was one tall dark woman with two children... She knew nobody on board and spoke to no one either all the voyage. She *was* a brick! Nothing worried her. She took all the official bullying and butting with striking unconcern and imperturbability (sic). When they threatened to check her progress for some alleged deficiency in her contract ticket at the New York docks, her tranquillity and nonchalance (sic) carried her over the crisis. ("Tuskegee Pilgrimage"
4)

Jabavu's admiration of the woman's stoicism seems to suggest a pilgrim's fortitude in the face of the adversities to be encountered. This "adventure", this 'venturing out' towards another, connected cultural experience, is exemplified in this instance of the lone traveller's valorisation, and textual instance that is revealing of the subconscious dynamic of the subject of the diary. Similarly, Sol Plaatje writes in his more eloquent account of his 1914 voyage to the United Kingdom (with the SANNC delegation including John

Dube) in the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, of his own sense of unease at what he finds onboard ship. However, he is not affected as Jabavu is and finds the conditions unnatural, almost alien. “My drastic Native disposition was suspicious of the freshness of the fresh milk on board, and would not be persuaded that it found its way into the steamer’s refrigerating house direct from Cape dairies. Its colour, at any rate, was not very reassuring, and I have done remarkably well on black coffee and tea” [Willan (ed.) 1996:177].

Apart from descriptions of the conditions experienced during travel, Jabavu also makes some valuable observations about the immigrant experience generally. I have already mentioned the nature of his cultural position as a travelling subject and the symbolic nature of his journey. When the ship arrives at the Irish port of Queenstown to collect more immigrants, mail and passengers, we observe a curious similarity between the experience of colonised subjects from two very different continents. As Jabavu writes: “A better set of passengers come. Real Irishmen, with dark haired, + sharp features; quite a number of girls between 14 and 18 going with their parents to seek their Eldorado in the United States the so-called land of liberty. All look happy as if animated with the proverbial Irish buoyancy and humour” (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 6). Jabavu decides to ignore his newly arrived fellow travellers, but perhaps the difference between them does not allow for a more meaningful interaction. However, he mentions their gregariousness and I think he remains distant from them because of his feelings of superiority. He mentions the trade in fruit and shillelaghs (a traditional Irish cudgel) that they engage in and he delights in the liveliness of it all. He also admires their abandon and disregard for the conventions of conservative shipboard restrictions and regulations. The rest of the account proceeds without event and at this point it is interesting to observe Jabavu’s reactions to the Irish. They are at once objects of fascination and the subject of his amusement.

Jabavu’s arrival at New York on Thursday, 10 July 1913, is of particular interest because his descriptions of the experience are vivid and reveal the alienation that immigrants of all nationalities would have felt on their arrival in the United States. They are treated with an officious disdain by the immigration authorities. The value of this moment for our concerns here is that Jabavu is entering the country and beginning to experience the Other space as an outsider crossing the gulfs of history and ocean between Africa,

Europe and the New World. He is at the point of entry, about to disembark from the *Majestic* and experience the world of the black American. As he undergoes the arduous process of gaining entry to the country, he must suffer the same indignities as everyone else travelling steerage class. I include the description here in full because of the fascinating way in which it captures the alienating nature of immigration:

Once more we are subjected to a Medical Examination, being counted and driven single file into some sheepfold arrangements and the doctor detains one suspicious looking individual whose face was all rash and pimples and nose evidently swollen through alcoholic habits. [...] I thank goodness for saying goodbye to the “Majestic”, *and make a solemn engagement in my mind never to travel by that vessel again under any circumstances whatsoever.* [...] American officials take charge of us literally. They conduct their Medical scrutiny; and their handling of the passengers is not particularly gentle. *Somehow they pass me very easily and seem to have a mysterious confidence in my general appearance.* We are all grouped in sections in fenced-off sheep-pens accordingly as our luggage is entirely in our hands, in 1 box, in 2 boxes etc. Now we have to open every box and exhibit the contents in detail while the Yankee examiner may impudently ask you anything about everything in your box or bag before he writes on it his magic chalk sign to pass you. You next hawl out for a porter (if you call in a gentle, gentlemanly, or refined tone he will not hear!) [...] We wait here something like 2 hours until every passenger undergoes an equally searching scrutiny and we do not start until the last one has passed – in our case it happened to be Madama Italiana whose passports seem to provoke much confusion *and complication.* Away we sail back along the Hudson harbour, the sun blazing so fiercely that we can hardly breathe with comfort. In about ½ hour the tug pulls up near some gigantic buildings of the Customs House, the notorious Ellis Island, where we are doomed to suffer

the last and most exquisite personal investigation. We file up and are ordered to doff our headgear in readiness for the doctor's medical inspection. Once more we are humiliated and our eyelids are upturned and scrutinised; and we pass into a tremendous Walhalla room where there are hundreds, in fact thousands of other Steerage passengers [...] We face the elaborate offices of the examiners upon whose decision depends your fate whether you are to be allowed to enter America, be repatriated, or maintained in some place at the Country's discretion. Being well replenished with money and good health I entertain no qualms as to getting an easy "Pass". The attendants who control the order speak to the crowd in a *most rough peremptory and ready way, almost bordering on a scornful* unwarranted impudence. ("Tuskegee Pilgrimage" 15-18; text italics indicate what Jabavu omitted in his editing of the manuscript)

In the throng and confusion of this moment, we are given a vivid, if affected description of the difficulty of gaining entry to the United States. Jabavu is treated as everyone else of poorer economic means, much to his chagrin. It is interesting to observe that as he narrates the experience, he constructs himself as superior to the American immigration officials because of his British colonial sensibilities. He is every bit the Victorian gentleman and is unimpressed by the other steerage passengers, the "riff-raff dregs of the London East End and Montenegro" ("Tuskegee Pilgrimage" 17). We have observed this snobbery before and it is important to remember the confluence of events and affiliations that have brought Jabavu to this place of liminality, a transitory location that is unstable because of the confusion of the many different national groups present here. Jabavu's words reveal the inhuman treatment that immigrants received, and the indignity of being treated as a subject of examination by the probing and suspicious eye of the colonial officials waiting to end or begin the lives of those desperate to enter the New World. This description reveals the nature of American government and society as yet another colonial authority. The immigrants are treated as colonised subjects. They are simply passing from one empire to another, despite

the illusion that they are entering a land of promise and freedom.

Jabavu recognises this fact and his response is to take the superior line, invoking his British cultural knowledge and affectations. As I argue in the next chapter, this attribution and performance of a 'civilised' identity is the means through which the youthful Jabavu is able to survive the Other space, to maintain his individuality and stability of sense of self as a cultural outsider. He invokes this identity because of his black African roots and because he desires to be treated as any other educated British gentleman. This is, tragically, never possible of course and further into his account we observe the clearest example of this performative dynamic, where the text and the subject's responses become forms of distancing and affirming identity.

Prepared for the roughest Yankee ways, I take not the slightest notice of this Braggadocial rhodomontade. In fact not infrequently do I derive some amusement at it all. Well my turn comes at last. The cross-examination I undergo must have been as taxing as that of Dickens' Sam Weller (in *Pickwick's* trial), or to come to later times, as excruciating as that of Lady Sackville in the Scott Will Case when Advocate F. E. Smith brought the victim to tears. I had to give an impromptu life history, my goal, my aims, what I had with me, my money (in case it was under 25 dollars, i.e. £5); after a long time I gave absolute satisfaction as to my integrity as an immigrant. Eventually I am allowed to pass [...] ("Tuskegee Pilgrimage" 18)

This moment in this first part of the diary, or what I have chosen to call the transatlantic account, is the most significant because it is manifestly Jabavu's point of entry into the United States but also an initial indication of the way in which he sees himself in relation to the world. It is also the precursor text to the travelling consciousness and awareness of the world that he will go on to develop in his writing career. There is also a profound instability, as I have suggested, at this moment in the narrative, for we are at a point of transition where nationality and class are being contested and the quality of the travelling subject is being questioned.

I have attempted to establish in this chapter the importance of Jabavu as an intellectual voice in the writing of the African diaspora, his place in South African history, and how his youthful journey establishes the trajectory of this study and the routes and networks of affiliation that will bring us to the Lovedale and Fort Hare of 1936. I move then, in the next chapter, to Jabavu's account of his experience at Tuskegee in 1913.

* * *

Notes

1. Peires (1979:165) refers to Samuel Edward Krune Mqhayi (1875-1945) as the "greatest writer the Xhosa language has yet produced". *Ityala lamaWele* is an historical novel set during the reign of Hintsa (1808-1835). Text originally published by Lovedale Press in 1914.

2. John Tengo Jabavu had "grand plans" for his son and DDT Jabavu would probably have become a horse-breeder had it not been for the urging of his father (Higgs 1997:14).

3. I would like to thank Catherine Higgs for her provision of a copy of the M/S.

4. For instance, here Jabavu describes his father's roots as his father set them out:

He claimed to belong to Chief Msingapantsi of the house of Lusibalukulu among the AbaMbo or Fingoes, with the clan appellation of Jili, of the "Ama-Singawoti," the "Masengwas," the "Qabububendes," forbidding but favourite names of African history. His father says that their true name "Citywa" had been lost because "Jabavu," (which signifies "battle champion,") was an acquired war cognomen given to his progenitor on account of his fighting prowess. (Jabavu 1922:7)

5. In Jabavu's words (1928:49):

The franchise was first granted to the Natives of Cape Colony in 1854, without distinction as to white and black. Before this privilege was conferred upon the Natives, the evidence of both oral tradition and Cape historical records of the years 1848-1854

enables us to judge that the motives inspiring the officials of the then British Parliament were born of the essential Christian ethic, namely: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." They were founded on a system of unimpeachable equity to all human beings regardless of colour, race or creed.

6. That discourse's privileging of English was certainly no localised trend, for Emmanuel Obiechina (1973:76) writes that the "Black intelligentsia of [West African] [...] coastal towns [...] cultivated [an] ornate, elaborately woven style [that] flourished from the second half of the nineteenth until the early decades of the twentieth century."

7. See Jabavu's *The Influence of English on Bantu Literature* [1943] for a major account of the history of black literature in English in South Africa.

8. See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, July 4, 1936.

9. I would like to thank Prof. Isabel Hofmeyr for her provision of a translation by CK Moropa of Jabavu's text.

10. See *Umteteli wa Bantu*, September 7, 1929.

11. See Zachernuk's (2000) study of the emergence of the Nigerian intellectual elite for an interesting comparison to the black South African context.

12. Jabavu was "[t]he civilised son of a civilised man was rejected because he was black" (Higgs 1997:16).

13. For instance, in referring to Jabavu's resistance of the colonial metanarrative, he rejected the suggestion that his Mfengu people had historically sought protection from the British against a life of slavery enforced upon them by the Xhosa. Instead, in his public life, he furthered the assuaging of relations between the "Fingoes" (as he called his people) and the Xhosa, and attended the ceremonial functions of both. Further, he claimed that the Mfengu had not been emancipated by the British in 1835 and had, rather, left their Xhosa benefactors in search of cattle (Jabavu 1935). This attempt to subvert tribal differences was vital, given that Jabavu wanted to unify "the whole Native race in the Union of South Africa" (1920:155). Such claims to a common identity lent strength to Jabavu's professing to represent the interests of all black people in South Africa. Jabavu's move to heal Mfengu-Xhosa divisions was part of his political agenda as leader of the All African Convention, which he founded in 1935.

14. Mrs DDT [Florence Jabavu] would also write of the divisive influences of urbanization on African societies in the essay "Bantu Home Life," of how sons working away from home in cities found "a new feeling of independence from fathers who, being regularly at home awaiting the return of their sons, are placed in the humiliating position of being suppliant to sons" (1928:171). Similarly she also mentions how "a certain woman...left her husband, to carry on her profession elsewhere, visiting her home only periodically. In another similar case the young married woman has gone to work at a place too far away for her even to make periodic visits to her husband" (1928:172). It is important to make reference to the seemingly silent voice of an important black woman leader, who though subsumed under the patriarchal order of domestic life, was able to comment in an important way on the divisive social effects of urbanization and the migrant labour system. I also do this with the intention to *situate* Florence Jabavu's writing in relation to the more extensive focus on that of her husband's, to make manifest the simultaneous existence of a variety of gendered positions and voices. Mrs Jabavu formed the Bantu Women's Self-Improvement Association in the Cape Province (Kemp 1997:143) and was thus responsible for the encouragement of Christian moral and cultural values for African women and was thus a voice for its conformity.

15. Garvey's "Back to Africa" movement and its associated ideas were widely contested in the South African press of the time. For example, on 14 August 1920, the newspaper, *Umteteli wa Bantu*, launched its first attack on the man, and American Negroes more widely. In a vociferous editorial entitled, "An 'All Black Africa,'" the publication claimed that the American Negro was wont to

picture [...] himself as the dictator of his motherland. [...] The 'toenaderer' [individual or group engaged in the practice of reconciling two opposing forces or nations] usually works to enlist aid towards his own ascendancy, and we should be wary of the overtures from America which may be expected in the Back to Africa movement really means anything.

In addition to this, the editorial emphasized the differences between Africans and American Negroes.

There appears to be nothing of promise in the possible influx to this country of people akin to us in colour and origin but wholly dissimilar in character, thought, and habit. The millions of negroes in America are a nation unto themselves [...] and our mergence in search of a common destiny is for the moment unthinkable. Any unification of ourselves with the American negroes would be

the prelude to our absorption, and our ultimate extinction as a separate people.

The editorial also predicted the loss of white support for Africans should they entertain Garvey's black republicanism:

Moreover our national aims would suffer certain death, due to the introduction of that race-hatred which it is our highest interest to suppress. [...] European opinion which formerly set so strongly against us has unmistakably changed in our favour, and it would be folly to endanger or retard our advancement by acting in a manner destructive to that better understanding between white and black which is vital to our progress. [...] It is therefore wise to work in harmony with the Europeans in our midst as it is lunatic to be influenced by the impossible ideal of an "All Black Africa."

The article urged Africans to "go it alone," to reject the sign of African-American progress that in this instance implied racial disharmony. However, *Umteteli's* position would subsequently change and African moderates would come to embrace American Negro ideas about progress and self-development; as in the work of DDT Jabavu. What is relevant about this editorial is its contemporaneity to the time of Jabavu's writing and diary of his journey to Tuskegee. The editorial gestures towards the complex patterns and opposing debates surrounding diasporic relations, yet it seems rather unrealistic in its assertions about the justness of colonial authority leading us to question who wrote it. It is clear, however, that it emerged from a suspicion of Garvey's rather extremist message.

16. Consider, then, what David Coplan (1990:43) writes about the emulation of Tuskegee Institution within the South African social space:

In 1897, the A. M. E. Church established Wilberforce Institute, the 'South African Tuskegee,' at Evaton near Johannesburg. There African students were exposed to spirituals, nationalist conceptions of black solidarity and the strategies of racial progress proposed by the black American leader Booker T. Washington. Influenced by the ideals of men such as Washington and his American-educated counterpart John Dube, mission-school Africans felt a deep sense of frustration when confronted with the social and economic circumstances of African life in Kimberley and Johannesburg at the turn of the century.

17. The African-American traveller Ralph Bunche (1992:135) writes of his experi-

ence of DDT Jabavu:

Jabavu again took occasion to disparage, for my benefit, the policy of the African holding on to his old culture. He said it would better for the African to be, like the American Negro, with no cultural roots, and therefore willing and eager to clutch at every new idea, leader or movement. He praised the gullibility of the American Negro and his eager attendance at meetings, etc. He also laid emphasis on the tremendous amount of organisations among the American Negroes, which he regards with envy.

18. Catherine Impey of the Society of Friends (the Quakers that had funded part of Jabavu's education), had written to Booker T Washington on June 11, 1913, asking if Jabavu could spend a summer in Tuskegee observing the methods for educating African-Americans: "The father [...] and his son are hopeful of opening a door (of education) for their countrymen. They have read of your work at Tuskegee and are greatly impressed with the methods adopted, etc." (in Higgs 1997:184).

19. See "A Lecture Tour," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 9 January 1923.

20. Higgs (2000:130) also alludes to this fact and importantly mentions the Xhosa intellectual Tiyo Soga's translation of the Bunyan hypotext, entitled *Uhambo lomhambi* (1866).

Chapter 3

PERFORMANCE AS TEXT / AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS
PERFORMANCE: DDT JABAVU IN THE UNITED STATES
AND THE SIGNIFYING OF A CIVILISED SELF, 1913

He looked at the violin with dread, as something that could bring both pain and pleasure at once.

Njabulo Ndebele,
“Music of the Violin”

The white people who questioned the wisdom of starting this new school had in their minds pictures of what was called an educated negro, with a high hat, imitation gold eye-glasses, a showy walking-stick, kid gloves, fancy boots, and what not – in a word, a man who was determined to live by his wits. It was difficult for these people to see how education would produce any other any other kind of a colored man.

Booker T Washington,
Up from Slavery

The Venda may suggest that exceptional musical ability is biologically inherited, but in practice they recognise that social factors play the most important part in realising or suppressing it. For instance, a boy of noble birth might show great talent, but as he grows up he will be expected to abandon musical performance for the more serious (for him) business of government.

J. Blacking,
How Musical is Man?

An important site of contact (and a fact of the evidence of history) arises between African cultures in the Black Atlantic through the transnational circulation of music and other performative cultural forms (Gilroy 1993a; Lott 1994). With regard to the transcultural relations between African-Americans and black South Africans this is particularly apparent, a sign of the shifting movements of identity that reflect a past of slavery and three centuries of diaspora. In this chapter I examine a South African autobiographical text that is illustrative of these facts of history, considering DDT Jabavu’s extended descriptions of his musical performances at Tuskegee Industrial and Normal

Institute in his diary of that transatlantic journey. Identity must be understood as “more like a performance in process than a postulate, premise or originary principle” (Conquergood 1991:185).

The text demonstrates the distinctive formations of identity (both personal and national), writing, memory and culture clearly. As I have noted, the understanding of identity I take up in this chapter is one that is not essentialist but rather strategic, contingent and positional. As Stuart Hall, among others, suggests in his thoughts on cultural identity, such a position “accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (Hall & Du Gay 1996:4). They are dynamic and caught in a state of formation and reformation, “constantly in the process of change and transformation” (1996:4).

This sense of the fluid, constantly shifting and reconstituting nature of identity remains central to any reading of transatlantic texts, autobiographies and travel writings, given the hybrid negotiations of self and other that underpin such exchanges of culture. Indicated in Jabavu’s diary through the prolixity of the autobiographical subject’s immersion into the social and political world of African-American collegial and religious life, Jabavu also delivered lectures on South Africa for his African-American audiences to “discount” any false perceptions American Negroes held of the apparent primitive state of native Africans (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 39).

For Paul Gilroy (1993b:102),

[m]usic and its rituals can be used to create a model whereby identity can be understood neither as fixed essence nor as vague and utterly contingent construction to be reinvented by the will and whim of aesthetes [...] Though it is often felt to be natural and spontaneous, [black identity] remains the outcome of personal activity: language, gesture, bodily significations, desires [...] These significations can be condensed in the process of musical performance though it does not, of course, monopolise them. In the black Atlantic context, they produce the imaginary effect of an internal racial core or es-

sence by acting on the body through the specific mechanisms of identification and recognition that are produced in the intimate interaction of performer and crowd.

While we must acknowledge the hybrid quality of any identity in formation, we must also be conscious of the particular situation of events that characterises any evocation of self within black diasporic space. Self is the product of an “outcome of personal activity” of the performing subject’s intention to establish connections with an audience through a symbolic, physical expressiveness defined through “language, gesture, bodily significations, desires.” As we begin to consider the semeiosis of performance, of meaning creation through symbolic activity in relation to Jabavu’s textual representations of self in the diary, we need to be conscious of the complex, dynamic social experience that frames musical performance as self-representational activity. To semiotise performance is to be conscious of the intimate dynamic between “performer” and “crowd,” two experiential locations that shall form the basis of my reading of Jabavu’s performances at Tuskegee. Within the context of this set of dynamics, performance as social praxis in the diary can be understood to take place on several levels, and these exist not within a common dialectic but as mutually inclusive, dynamic elements that inform our reading of the text in this way. These include, among others, Jabavu’s performance of self as a gendered subject located within Tuskegee society (consider here Butler’s [1993] notion of gender performativity); his musical performances and lectures for African-American audiences meant both as a means through which he could delight in the spectacle of his public acknowledgement and as a means for survival in the material sense (an act of youthful, self-affirmation); and thirdly, the text itself as a performance of its subject’s identity, overt in its constant, self-congratulatory tone. But for the purposes of this analysis I shall necessarily focus on Jabavu’s musical performances as self-representational activity in this chapter, given the complexity and several meanings of ‘performance’ as the concept is understood within the human sciences.

We must also draw an important distinction between the musical performances themselves, the ways in which they are represented in the text, and the text as a form of performance itself. As Paul Zumthor writes:

It could be said that performance is a moment of reception, a privileged point in time in which a text is actually experienced. In some cases, reception limits itself to performance. This is true in normal pragmatic discourses. Perhaps the literary text, in contrast to all others, is also characterised by the fact that it sets up a strong contrast between reception and performance. This contrast becomes more important the longer the reception lasts. (1994: 218)

This understanding of 'performance' conveys something of the multivalent quality of Jabavu's diary, as several levels of performance are contained within this distinct cultural artefact. As we read the text, we need to remain conscious of these relations and also the fact that musical performance becomes a significant space within which significations of self take place and are received. We are also treating his performances as a text in a manner that serves to redefine the idea of culture and identity as expressed through autobiography while remaining conscious of the complex social space within which these demonstrations of self are being enacted. Mary Louise Pratt (1992: 4) uses the term "contact zone" to define social spaces where "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other," and also recognises that within transcultural exchanges there are always different levels of power. While she acknowledges the possibility of conflict in these situations, the transcultural dynamic present in Jabavu's engagement with an African-American Other does not suggest any violence of exchange but rather a more complex politics of identification and translation of identity.

For Jabavu the diary constitutes a singular act of affirmation for it contains no reference to any personal difficulties throughout its length. We find only positive social receptions to Jabavu as an individual; a surreal world that adores him blindly. The diary acts as a survival device for its author, a place of private reflection within which Jabavu could locate himself in relation to the outer world of his experience of African-American society. As we have noted, this tactical self-representation is a public act for it becomes a vehicle for Jabavu to prove his civility to those who do not construct him in this way. His embracing of colonial culture with its 'refined' tenets of cul-

tural identity is meant as a symbolic reinforcing, a proof if you will, of his capability for civilised aspiration and behaviour, and the inflated language of his diary with its singular focus on his achievements implies that he wanted other people to read it. The diary constitutes a self-conscious representation of the African subject as civilised, cultured intellectual, and became part of the larger project of a memoir that he was intending to write near the end of his life. A significant clue to this is to be found on the last page of the diary where the last, fragmentary and concluding entry written in pencil ends: “[R]eturned to South Africa in September [1914] as described in the *next chapter*. Among the testimonials obtained at Birmingham are the following:-” (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 57; my emphasis). We have only this fragment available to us, and it is important to note that we are reading Jabavu at a particular moment in his life. This is performative writing and it brings into question the status of this ‘non-fictional’ text as something rather like fiction, for given the author’s exhibitionist tendencies, we might imagine him as a character within his own story, constructed as a symbolic expression of self-valorisation. Shumaker (1954:101-141), for instance, distinguishes between three “modes” of autobiography – the expository, the mixed and the narrative. Jabavu’s diary could be typified as the “mixed,” for it is not concerned only with the exposition of historical fact or simply a work of the imagination. However, it does tend more towards the quality of a narrative, given its self-praising development and often incredulous overtones. With a text such as Jabavu’s diary we witness the destabilising of normative conceptions of genre delimitation and thus any treatment of the work demands a negotiated reading that employs severally disparate modes of reading and critical methodology to arrive at some sense of the ways in which Jabavu enacts his several selves for the gaze of the African-American other.

Jabavu’s exhibitionist tendencies as a performer would have become more apparent in his youth, largely outside of the influence of his father and trying to survive within the foreign colonial spaces of Britain and the United States. While a student in Wales in 1903, Jabavu would engage in such acts of public self-indulgence, for

[he] found that he was enough of a novelty that he could earn pocket change performing the cakewalk for tourists on Col-

wyn Bay's boardwalk. Such seemingly harmless fun was not universally appreciated; one theatre critic reviewing the play *Williams and Walker in Dahomey*, which opened in London on May 16, 1903, and which featured the dance, dismissed the cakewalk as 'a grotesque, savage, and lustful heathen dance, quite proper in Ashanti, but shocking on the boards of a London hall'. (Higgs 1997:18)

Importantly, Higgs highlights the nature of the youthful Jabavu, who would return to a very different South Africa in 1914 from that which he left eleven years before, and begin a long career as an educator at Fort Hare University Native College in the Eastern Cape. The young Jabavu is unaware of the real effects of his performance within the colonial setting of 1903, in that he "was inadvertently reinforcing British stereotypes about Africans" (Higgs 1997:18), but there was a real shift in his intentions when he visited the United States in 1913, and he would spend the rest of his career resisting these stereotypes in maturity.

In the style of Jabavu's dress (see Figure 6) we sense a symbolic attempt to destabilise racial stereotypes, to move beyond the limits of colonialist assumptions of African behaviour. This makes Jabavu a very complex character, whether considered in relation to the identity that he creates for himself in the diary, or as a later leader for black educational and social rights in South Africa. As Campbell (1998:303) notes, in one instance, Jabavu "angrily disavowed Thaele's¹ suggestion that Africans remove pictures of Queen Victoria from their homes, a disavowal that the 'professor' [Thaele] dismissed as typical of his [Jabavu's] 'me-too-boss-attitude.' 'Mr Jabavu has (unfortunately) received his education in England, not America,' he [Thaele] explained. 'English education is too circumscribed and tends to specialisation; American, encyclopaedic and perspective [sic]'. This is indicative of a rejection of Jabavu's ideas by more outspoken individuals, and we might feel critical of his accommodation of colonial authority, given that Jabavu considered himself to be an avowed British subject. It is interesting that "Professor" Thaele "also demonstrate[s] the impact of non-verbal and oral performance on audiences though [his] presentation of self and style" (Kemp 1997:215). Through his political performances, Thaele was attempting to denounce the

conservative position of politicians like DDT Jabavu.

Kemp & Vinson (2000:150) refer to contemporary 1930s accounts that described Thaele's public performances as scattered with "spasms of eloquence" and "weird posturings". However, they move beyond this colonialist position to suggest that Thaele's "seemingly idiosyncratic behaviours, including hyperbolic dress, exaggerated language, adoption of the title 'Professor,' and manipulation of whites in the audience were actually sophisticated performance tools that served his political program" (2000:150). Thus, by taking on the appearance of a 'civilised' white subject in such a fashion, Thaele was self-consciously challenging colonialist assumptions of 'typical' black behaviour. He was undertaking a form of unstated 'resistance' through the act of performance. This provides a useful analogy for considering Jabavu's performances at Tuskegee, despite his clownish propensities. Many of the components of Jabavu's performances at Tuskegee, especially in terms of his dress and his use of a refined English expressive discourse, clearly mirror those of Thaele's methods. A common trope of the performative is present here, yet this suggests the complex ways in which very different performing subjects embraced this form of mimicry as performance. Thaele was also educated at an African-American college, Lincoln, and through his work sought to move beyond the largely practical focus of Lovedale and Tuskegee's educational programmes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In terms of self-presentation, Kemp writes for instance, that Clements Kadalie, the important Malawian-born black trade unionist in South Africa, "noted that he was often mistaken for American because of his limited understanding of local African languages. However, [she] would also add that his entire style of dress and self-presentation made him 'shine'" (1997:245). Thus, we sense the vital importance of these components in the construction of a resistant performance.

While Jabavu is African and conscious of this facet of his identity, his admiration for colonial culture suggests that he is in some ways a mimic man. Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha suggest very different understandings of this concept of mimicry; the enactment of the Other through the Manichean desire of the colonised subject accept one's lot in the face of repression by a dominant culture. For Fanon (1967) the condition of mimicry is

rigidly defined. The colonised subject possesses no agency with which to resist the imposition of a dominant culture and blindly seeks to reproduce it. We observe that Jabavu seeks to be *British* in one sense, to prove the degree and reach of his civilisation as a man, but I do not think that he possesses the limited agency of the colonised subject in Fanon's conception. Jabavu takes an almost burlesque delight in the fashion with which he is able to destabilise the myth of a savage Africa.

In Bhabha's terms mimicry "emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (1994: 85) due to the fact that colonial mimicry is generated by a desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, "as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (1994: 86). However, Bhabha also emphasises that the discourse of mimicry is in most of its forms constructed around a sense of ambivalence. As he writes in the essay, "Of Mimicry and Man" (Bhabha 1994:86), "in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse [...] is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal". Mimicry both challenges but is subject to the colonialist master discourse. Therefore, while Jabavu's performance becomes an act of mockery, it is also self-consciously reaching for the identity of the Other. Of course, Bhabha's articulation of this ambivalence is much more sophisticated than my unskilled summation, but it fits well with Jabavu's performative strategies and gives agency to a colonised subject. We are able to read the textuality of such a self-representation in new ways that question the very politics of reading.

Thus, Bhabha identifies mimicry and ambivalence to be the central indicators of the dissonance implicit in western discourse. The mimic man is white but not quite. He constitutes only a partial representation of the other and far from reasserting the base of power that the coloniser imagines himself to possess, the colonised subject, through imitation subverts and destabilises the fixity of the colonialist's authority, the underpinning of his identity. Ambiguously, mimicry both enables power and signifies a loss of agency through simultaneously stabilising and destabilising the location, the centre of power. Importantly, Bhabha is at great pains to emphasise that mimicry does not conceal an identity behind its mask. It "is a double vision

that is a result of what [he has] described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object” (1994: 88).

We must be aware of the dichotomy between the younger and the older Jabavu, the former desirous to appease the demands placed upon him by his father and the pressures of surviving in a foreign, colonial space, and the latter, a man disillusioned by the passage of time and the wisdom of life experience that it brings with it. On receiving his degree from the University of London in 1912, Jabavu began to style himself as “D. D. T. Jabavu, B. A. (London), in a mixture of pride and arrogance from which his colleagues and students inferred the superiority of a British degree over a South African one” (Higgs 1997: 20), and this achievement would only strengthen the will of his self-aggrandising performances in text and in social situation (see Figure 8). Jabavu’s qualification was of enormous importance to his self-image.

As Amanda Kemp writes, “[f]ollowing in the footsteps of his father, DDT Jabavu and other moderates continued to invoke American Negro achievements to signify at white segregationists and to inform discussions of the adoption of Western Civilisation” (1997:83). This suggestion suitably complicates our reading of the relations between African-American and black South African cultural knowledges, for the ascendancy of the former to a position of civility at once destabilises colonialist notions of African savagery yet also reinforces the mimicry derided in such attempts to deny yet embody the signs of Western authority through the imitation of the colonial master. What makes Kemp’s work vital for my reading of DDT Jabavu’s performances in his Tuskegee diary is her application of Claudia Mitchell-Kernan’s (1977 [1972]) concept of “Signifyin’” developed further in the work of Henry Louis Gates (1988), to South African “autobiographies, biographies, speeches, essays and fiction” (Kemp 1997:32) of the period 1920-1943.

Important in what it suggests about the agency of any expressive act by the colonised, black subject, that seeks to uplift, valorise the subjugated space of its cultural memory, the concept of “Signifying” for all three authors, represents an act of resistance to white authority through the symbolic expression of self-value and the mocking tone of the colonised subject towards centres of colonial and white segregationist power – initiated through the act of performance. As Kemp (1997:31-33) writes to establish the conceptual basis of her study:

Signifyin(g) is a negotiated, shared process, a dance between at least two parties. Fraught with uncertainty, it is, nonetheless, a dynamic in which the speaker lives [...] Mitchell-Kernan aligns signifyin(g) with power inequities. Because it is purposely indirect, signifyin(g) allows one to mock, insult, warn or diminish dominant groups or persons without risking a direct confrontation. [...] Henry Louis Gates has argued that in black texts signifyin(g) is repetition with a black vernacular difference. In this formulation black literary texts signify on each other and on European/American literary traditions through vernacular practices that might include loud-talking, lies, mocking, or verbal duelling [...] I read [African moderate newspapers]...as 'speech events' or performances, in terms of placement of articles, use of photographs, and juxtaposition, as well as apparent meaning. [...] I frequently return to the idea that through performance and repetition, Africans act out their communities. In fact, just as Gilroy maintains the black Atlantic is unfinished and in process, I would take [Benedict] Anderson even a step further and argue that imagined political communities require ongoing processes to maintain themselves.

Within the space of Jabavu's performances at Tuskegee, we find that the 'dance' between himself as performing subject, and the African-American audience, to be a markedly tenuous one, a reflected identity always in process and subject to definition and re-definition, established through the informality of the social life that Jabavu so enjoys. Signifying constitutes art as symbolic resistance to white authority for Mitchell-Kernan and Gates through informal, speech acts possessive of a mocking tone. However, in the case of Jabavu, I propose that we move beyond the familiar relationship of resisting colonised subject to coloniser, towards the space of relations between colonised and colonised, in which the sense of location is uncertain and the relationship between both subjects is defined through a common relationship with the coloniser, but in which one has attained a higher level of

assimilation of the coloniser's culture than the other. The "speech events" that Kemp refers to could be understood as performative events in our reading of Jabavu's performances.

In a discussion tracing the genealogy of 'Signifying', Myers (1990:61-64) suggests that

[t]o signify, according to jazz musician Mezz Mezzrow, is to "hint, to put on an act, boast, make a gesture." The novelist Zora Neale Hurston defines signifying as "a contest in hyperbole carried on for no other reason." In these conceptions, signifying sounds not too different from the traditional category of rhetoric known as "epideictic," a term used for a display piece, a speech the sole purpose of which is to put the orator's gifts on display (epideixis), and not with any practical intention. Yet to assimilate black signifying to the "Eurocentric" tradition of classical rhetoric is to lose "what we might think of as the discrete black difference." And so Gates takes pains to trace the concept to Africa instead.

Gates's work is important for any study of the black American as travelling, diasporic subject in the world. Schloss (2004:138) suggests that signifying, specifically in musical performance, "allows individuals to demonstrate intellectual power while simultaneously obscuring the nature and extent of their agency." The intent of a performative action (and I use this term to define any instance of the performance of selfhood, an extension of the notion of 'performance' as an indicator of a moment of the self engaged in the course of living) within this context is to express one's individuality, one's agency of self, without making obvious the intentions of that action. Such an action constitutes a response to the forces of discrimination that sought to deny black Americans the right to an equal place in American society.

There is something uncanny about the location of Jabavu as performing subject. While he is conscious of his location as colonised subject yet identifies himself as part of a minority elite black citizenry, he is dually resisting white colonial authority while also denying the superiority of the marginalising perceptions of that the American Negro holds towards Afri-

cans. However, he is only able to fashion a stable identity for himself while mastering the impositions of Western high culture and material appearance, in the face of resisting colonialist assumptions that are the product of multiple colonial experiences. As Jacobus Xaba, a South African church leader stated, “We never dreamed that [American Negroes] recognised us as their fellow country people originally, they having succumbed in the privileges of education, Christianity, and civilisation, and we, still under the kingdom of ignorance and heathenism” (Campbell 1995:141).

Thus, we must be conscious of the relation of opposition established between diasporic identities through moderate African deployment of the narrative of American Negro progress as a mark of civilisation. We must remember that Jabavu was educated at the centre of Empire and has had the opportunity to master Western civilisation. He represents a transitional figure within diasporic history that suggests much about the complexity of his situation at Tuskegee. We are observing, through the close reading of the diary and its descriptions of performance, a new dynamic of relations between diasporic subjects, unstable in the level of its theorisation. I propose that we understand Jabavu’s recitals and lectures for African-American audiences as a symbolic act of resistance to the African-American-held paradigm that Africa is a primitive space, unable to progress towards the desirable levels of Western civilisation that African-Americans would attempt to disseminate throughout the southern African sub-continent. They did this, importantly, through the missionary work of the American Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church (Campbell 1993; Chirenje 1987), and Jacobus Xaba was a key mediator in the establishing of the Church in South Africa.

While I have not sought to engage with the individual theorists that Kemp so skillfully interpolates in her reading of South African literary and journalistic texts, I use her statement of purpose as a way towards reading Jabavu’s performances at Tuskegee. Kemp mentions the emergence of three forms of performance of community within South Africa at the time and I refer only to the first as it best typifies Jabavu’s situation: “[M]oderates [such as Jabavu] performed continuity with white South Africa through demonstrated mastery of its markings of civilisation, including English language proficiency, Christianity, commercial success, clothing and strategic invocation of a moderate American Negro” (Kemp 1997:35). Through his

performances, both in the United Kingdom, the United States and later as the “professor” in South Africa, Jabavu sought to legitimate, to confirm the degree of his achievement of civilisation in these self-fashioning ways and I have already considered all of them to some degree in this discussion and in the preceding chapter of this study. I argue that the diary in its entirety constitutes a form of textual performance, public in its intention yet private in its affirmation of the autobiographic subject whose life it embodies.

While the second chapter of this study established some of the relational and conceptual trajectories of the 1913 voyage, with the boat trip from Southampton to New York serving as its symbolic stage of reference (a Middle Passage crossing from the other side), here, I read Jabavu’s musical performances in the diary (for much of the diary is concerned only with this) in the light of the complex relations, cycles of performativity that are embedded within its descriptive concerns. The ensuing analysis will argue that the performance of a national self within a foreign space like Tuskegee exists in a complex dialectic with the transition to an unconscious, yet manifest, awareness of the cultural connectedness of the diasporic condition. This reconstituted form of subjectivity is suggestive of a subtle articulation of a mutual identity, expressed through and within performance as a means of survival; a gesturing towards the possibility of emotively and experientially connecting with a significant cultural other.

* * *

At this juncture I invoke a key South African experience of the wider frame of music in the transatlantic diaspora to provide a necessary contextual location from which to read Jabavu’s performances of self and nationhood in the Tuskegee diary. The extended visit of Orpheus McAdoo and his Virginia Jubilee Singers to South Africa between 1890 and 1898 (Erlmann 1991:21-53; Marsh 1938) provided an important site for contact between African-Americans and black South Africans. On January 25, 1890, four women and their two male counterparts arrived in Cape Town,² commencing a jubilee hymn and minstrel show at the Vaudeville Theatre on the evening of June 30, 1890 to the delight of numerous critics. This first tour ended on January 25, 1892, and later, in 1895, the new Jubilee Singers returned to Cape Town

for another tour that ended in 1898. Many decided to remain permanently in South Africa, and one of them, for example, was Mattie Edwards, a soprano who made her home in Kimberley. She went on to perform with the Philharmonic Society and the Colonial Concert Company, and directed the Diamond Minstrels (Davis 1975: 508).

It is important to consider the symbolic space within which the Jubilee Singers performed the range of material that they conveyed to South African audiences: “Their shows had concert party songs, Afro-American folk songs, spirituals, instrumental music, ‘Grand Opera,’ juggling, jokes and comic sketches, solo dancing and cakewalks.” The group had a significant effect on all racial groups in South Africa (Coplan 1990:39). It is important to stress, at the conceptual level, the notion of the translocation of identity in this instance, of how the substance of American Negro cultural memory was brought to bear, through diasporic movements, upon the cultural lives of so many South Africans of diverse identities. The mode of performance helped translate into materiality the notion of a shared cultural identity through the performance of an Other, African-American culture, within the South African national space. One of the group’s members and brother of Orpheus McAdoo, Eugene, wrote to the editor of the American publication, *Southern Workman*, in January 1894 while touring the Eastern Cape, calling Lovedale Institution “this African Hampton” and referring to Dr Stewart’s (principal of Lovedale) “noble work of educating the head, heart, and hand of the South African native” (in Chirenje 1987:176). Throughout the letter, Eugene McAdoo outlines similarities between the methods of education at both institutions, for “here as elsewhere everything was scrupulously a model of [theirs] here at Hampton, and had it been Tuesday instead of Wednesday [the students of Lovedale] might have expected some baked beans in their pans” (in Chirenje 1987:177). Further, McAdoo goes on to describe the Singers’ performance at Lovedale and the response of the black South African audience (Chirenje 1987:177):

We were soon shown in to the Assembly Room where we were to sing, and the girls and boys came in much in the same way as do the students [at Hampton]. There were nearly five hundred of them, and their faces were a picture of inter-

est and anticipation. We sang for them for nearly a couple of hours, and then they favoured us with some of their songs, which we thoroughly enjoyed, for their voices were indeed good. In passing out many of them shook our hands and bade us good by (sic.) after thanking us for our singing.

The Institution at Lovedale is a great power for good, and in that town of Alice, where its influence is chiefly felt, we found a more respectable class of natives than in any other part of the country we visited. The graduates from there are mostly sincere in their work of assisting their less fortunate brothers, and we found them scattered over different parts of Africa engaged in teaching.

In this extract we are able to sense the mutual conveying of cultural knowledges yet also the position of superiority that the African-American, performing subject, holds towards his filial “natives” in South Africa. It is through the mode of performance that senses of mutuality are established between subjects on opposite sides of the transatlantic divide. Throughout his writing, Eugene McAdoo is at pains to confirm temporal and physical congruities between his home and the alterity of the location of Africa. He uses the word “scattered” to highlight the transnational movements of some of Lovedale’s graduates throughout Africa and is conscious of the class differences between the mission-educated black South African elite and their “less fortunate brothers.” It is through the sign of Western progress, embodied in learning and the acculturation of colonial knowledge that the colonised subject is able to progress beyond the limits of primitiveness embodied in the amorphous construction of Africa by the American Negro writing subject’s mind.

Crucial to this dynamic of identity in process is the fluctuation in meaning of similarity and difference, connection and progress beyond the “girls and boys” being entertained by the Jubilee Singers. As in the mind of Eugene McAdoo, Hampton and Lovedale, again, can be understood as nodal points (Lester 2001) by means of which diasporic knowledges coalesce and flow beyond the limits of any single national imaginary. They initiate sites of access through which diasporic subjects are able to assimilate and

dispense each other's cultural identities, while in this instance the moment of performance becomes the site through which such travelling notions of identity become apparent in the texts of its subjects. Here, we observe the response of an American Negro to the performative space of South Africa, yet we must also consider the response of the black South African audience to the performance of Negro identity.

John Tengo Jabavu wrote with great admiration for the Jubilee Singers in 1890, expressing his recognition for their artistic abilities, sociopolitical significance for a local audience and progress above the position of native Africans:

It would strongly savour of presumption for a Native African of this part to venture a critique on his brethren from America, who are now visiting this quarter of their fatherland, and whose position, socially, is being deservedly pointed at on all hands as one that Natives here should strive to attain to. As Africans, we are, of course, proud of the achievements of those of our race. Their visit will do their countrymen here no end of good. Already it has suggested reflection to many who, without such a demonstration, would have remain sceptical as to the possibility, nay the probability, of the Natives of this country being raised to anything above remaining as perpetual hewers of wood and drawers of water. The recognition of the latent abilities of Natives [...] cannot fail to exert an influence for the mutual good of all inhabitants of this country.³

It is evident from John Tengo Jabavu's musings that he brings together the terms of American Negroes and South African "Natives" within the context of the discourse of "brethren" and "race," while also valorising the position of his cousins from the United States. As he suggests, the African-American has already achieved a certain level of civilisation that apparently eludes black South Africans. John Tengo Jabavu is also aware that African-Americans view Africa as their "fatherland" (see also Washington [1909]), and he sees these people, who had demonstrated the possibility of a civilised Afri-

can, destined not to be “perpetual hewers of wood and drawers of water.” When considered within the context of current debates around the politics of transatlanticism, John Tengo Jabavu valorises African-American above African cultural identity in the same way as Paul Gilroy’s work; a fact critiqued in an article by Ntongela Masilela (1996) and in the work of Laura Chrisman (2001; 2003:73-88). The deployment of the African-American narrative of progress within the South African cultural space remains a complex dynamic of intercultural engagement, and in both the writing of Eugene McAdoo and John Tengo Jabavu we sense the manifestly conscious location of this sign.

As I have mentioned, in Jabavu’s dress, the urbane manner of his expression of English language, his affected ways and valorisation of Booker T Washington’s practical philosophy, we see the African moderate desirous of a position in colonial society. As a statement of his purpose, before the most extensively described performance in the diary, and dated Wednesday, August 13, 1913, Jabavu establishes the motivation for his performances:

My Recital:-Full house all expectant-especially after what they had read of ‘Dark Africa’ and many irresponsible magazine articles and pamphlets, which by laying great stress only on the worst side of the African, had not only damaged the prestige of the potential powers of the African native, but had left a patronising, if not a actually a contemptuous attitude towards the native African. Today it was my duty to discount this. After supper I get into my evening dress and appear as attractive as possible for the contest. I had advertised it to begin at 8 promptly but by 8 there was hardly a soul there. Americans, like Africans, make absolutely no object of time. But my 8.30 the room was full, the girls having come in one bunch. Mr. Logan signals for me to enter. *I come in amidst cheers and struggle heroically to banish stage fright.* (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 39-40; italics indicate author’s omission of text with pencil from the original manuscript and in all subsequent quotes from the manuscript)

This moment of introduction to a significant performance in the diary serves to illustrate some of the tensions that I explore in this chapter. Jabavu is keenly aware of the damaging effects of the popular representation of Africa through the print media, of how they are guilty of “laying great stress only on the worst side of the African” and of having created a “patronising, if not actual [...] contemptuous attitude” on the part of African-Americans towards Africans. Importantly, Jabavu presciently captures some of the objections of Chrisman against what she sees as Gilroy’s essentialising imperatives. Jabavu’s performances become, then, a symbolic act of “Signifying” at the colonial assumptions that African-Americans hold about Africans, and he does much to establish himself as the medium that conveys this means of resistance. Higgs (1997:7) suggests: “Jabavu’s aim—by virtue of his own civilised example—was to rid his African-American audience of any notion that Africans in particular, or black people in general, were by definition ‘primitive’.” Consider Jabavu’s formal dress, his intention to appear as “attractive as possible,” and the amusing assertion that Africans and black Americans possess the common trait of tardiness.

I sought in this inclusion to allude to some of the hybrid politics of identity that shall frame this discussion. In the diary, Jabavu figures himself as the hero and the degree of his acculturation of Western cultural practices is the means by which he establishes this form of identity. Jabavu is a transcultural figure if we consider the development of his later life as an intellectual, able to appropriate another identity while also resisting through writing the ambivalence of colonial authority with its “betrayal” of the mimic men that are so desirous to be located at its centre, appropriators of the dynamics of its operation, its language and other signifying practices.

Kemp (1997:8) extends the meaning of ‘performance’ with reference to the work of the drama theorist, Keir Elam (1980), “beyond the proscenium arch to the stage of everyday life. In political meetings or church services, the performer, the author, assumes representative meaning as his body is on view and the various elements of his costume, voice, and actual message interact.” As we begin to uncover the meaning conveyed within Jabavu’s performances at Tuskegee, we need to be sensitive to these material facts of his representation of self for survival, for it is on the stage of everyday life that we read these descriptive events.

To connect Jabavu's performances to the wider contexts of music in the diaspora is important, given the manner in which I began this chapter, and in considering the flow of black South African musics to the United States, it is important to mention that some of the earliest recordings of traditional Zulu music took place in the United States in this early period. A relative of the Zulu educationist, John Dube, Madikane Cele, attended the African-American Hampton Institute, from 1907 to 1913, exposing his teachers and fellow students to Zulu folk practices (Erlmann 1991:72) –another fact of the history of engagement between African-American and black South African cultural knowledges (Booth 1976; De Waal 1988). Reference to such connections makes any reading of Jabavu's performances part of a *tradition* of black South Africa music and performance in the United States and United Kingdom. For instance, Sol Plaatje, author of the novel *Mhudi*, and a prominent ANC intellectual, took part in a theatrical production entitled "Cradle of the World," that opened at London's Philharmonic Hall on 9 August 1923. He was responsible for a particular theatrical sketch and participated in it, acting the part of a Chief Dumakude and sang a war song (Willan 1984: 288). As the publication, *South Africa*, noted about the show: "It is a welcome change, after seeing so many tribes on the screen, to see some Africans in the flesh. [...] [T]he sketch as a whole is a lively one. [...] Those interested in foreign lands will enlarge their knowledge by spending an afternoon or evening at the Philharmonic Hall" (in Willan 1984: 288). The criticism by *South Africa*, however, also romanticises this representation of the colonised subject as one that exoticises and purports the myth of the noble savage; the actions of the performers are reduced to a tawdry savagery, a competition of lusts between two "native men" over a "Miss Gupta" that is subsumed under the anthropomorphising discourse of a "wild scrimmage" and "spears that fly and crash against the shields." While we might be critical of such a reflection of African culture within the British colonial space and what effects it would have on the popular imagination, Plaatje himself wrote that this spectacle of performance "gave [him] the facility of dictating [...] traditional music to the Director of the orchestra at the London Coliseum" (in Willan 1984: 289) and thus opened up the space of Africa more directly to the colonial imagination. Very differently, Jabavu's performances at Tuskegee were meant as a symbolic act of resistance to these colonial as-

sumptions, though he would have to subsume himself under the facts of colonial material culture, the suit and the violin, to be able to *signify back* at African-American perceptions of African primitiveness.

Plaatje also visited Tuskegee in 1922, writing in a letter to Robert Moton's (the principal of Tuskegee after Booker T Washington died in 1915) secretary: "I have no words to adequately express my gratitude for the kind reception accorded me by the Principal and everybody at Tuskegee with whom I came in contact. I never felt so sorry to leave a place as I did when I had to turn my back on your great institution yesterday [...]" (in Willan 1984: 279).

Jabavu's 1913 transatlantic voyage prefigures yet mirrors in many ways the dynamic and course of Plaatje's journey to the United States in 1922, the same year that James Aggrey would visit South Africa (Smith 1932 [1929]), and again highlights the fact of the dynamic of connections between South Africa and the United States' colonised peoples. John Dube and Pixley ka Seme had also met and corresponded with Washington in the preceding years, and Plaatje would continue to write to Moton in the ensuing years, conveying something of the social and political realities of pre-apartheid South Africa in his letters (in Willan [ed.] 1996). DDT Jabavu also met AB Xuma while at Tuskegee, and this "foreshadowed a future partnership" (Gish 2000: 28) between them, as they would both participate in the All Africa Convention in 1936. Thus, it is clear that there was a continuous black South African presence at Tuskegee both during the Washington and Moton years.

Thus, to establish a sense of comparison between both Plaatje and Jabavu's performances, I propose that within them, we observe a common dynamic of the translocation of identity throughout the multiple significations of cultural identity that become manifest within any moment of performance. When we begin to conceive of the relocation of identity and "Signifying" as discursive practices that inform the circulation of culture for whatever motive that a performing subject might intend, we also become aware of the politics of place and location, a notion that I have already considered extensively in the previous chapter of this study. We need to think, then, about the ways in which music informs our sense of place. Place, or location, following Giddens (1990:18), "refers to the physical setting of so-

cial activity as situated geographically.” Giddens suggests that a consequence of modernity is the “phantasmagoric” separation of space from place, as places become “thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them” (1990:18). This dislocation requires an anxiety-ridden process of relocation (as I have mentioned) or, to employ Giddens’ term, “re-embedding” (1990:88). This re-embeddedness is evident in the dynamic, the intention, of both Plaatje and Jabavu’s performances. They attempt to ‘relocate’ themselves for, in Plaatje’s case, the dissemination of colonised cultures within the centre of Empire, and in Jabavu’s, for the purpose of destabilising colonially-created myths about Africa. The latter instance involves an historical irony that results from the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, of how colonised subjects lay colonialist assumptions upon the very brethren that they are trying in some fashion to reconnect with and uplift. In this way, the politics of the relocation of identity as it is informed through music and performance, is amongst one of many ways in which social groups attempt to transcend the limits of their national identities, prefigured in the socialisation of nationhood and the subjectivity of the emotional and public-critical response to the space of the other. Music and performance, in this sense, have a vital role to play in this translation of self towards new contexts, whilst it is clear that sociocultural influences remain central to our reading of any textual representations of performance through the dynamic of their intentions.

As we begin to understand the dynamics of the individual subject’s performance of identity, of Jabavu’s location as a performing subject, it is in the work of Erving Goffman (1959) that we find a theoretical starting point for our concerns. Goffman suggests that people must perform their social position and consciously or unconsciously manage the impressions they create. The performance of identity – whether class, race or nation – requires repetition and competence in displaying or interpreting cues. Thus, we may read Jabavu’s performance at Tuskegee as intentional act intended towards a means for survival, of his desire to negotiate the alterities of a transnational history of cultural circulation of which he was presently unconscious. Goffman understands performance and its metaphoric application to the social dynamics of everyday life as “the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of

observers. It will be convenient to label as ‘front’ that part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance” (1959:22). Through this performative metaphor, it is important to note that Goffman’s theorising of the subject’s enactment of self through social engagement is clearly rooted in his disciplinary orientation as a social psychologist.

The value of Goffman’s work lies in the variety of theoretical and conceptual tools that it provides for our reading of Jabavu’s musical performances at Tuskegee. There is, firstly, the “setting” of the performance, its physical location of operation, and secondly, the “appearance” and “manner” of the performing subject, to employ Goffman’s terms. Goffman is keenly aware of the social situation in which the performing subject interacts with an audience, and how the facades of performed identity may not seem congruent with the intentions of the performance itself. In the case of Jabavu, we have already established a significant reason for his musical performances. However, I do not think that this was a singular, avowed purpose, for Jabavu also delights in the social situation that he finds himself within, to be able to experience the profound feeling of belonging defined in a relatively liberated space such as Tuskegee. Consider this entry from Monday, 14 July 1913, written just after Jabavu’s arrival at Tuskegee:

My first breakfast at the Dining Hall. Atmosphere still strange. What a change for me! Nobody knows I am an African. From mere looks everyone assumes me to be an ordinary American negro visitor from some one or other of the States and pays no more attention. They realise my foreign nature only when they start conversation with me, to discover that my language is not the commonly known nasalised American English but the broad England English. In England where I was always a social monstrosity to be gazed at everywhere by every mortal I had got brazen to being stared at and learnt to expect it everywhere; here I was a penny coin lost among hundreds of other coins. (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 31)

Here, we begin to sense a newfound expression of ‘home’ for Jabavu.

While he has lost his individuality, his sense of self is now connected to that of a larger group, and he feels a connection, an association, that leaves us aware of the delight that can be taken in the feeling of the “ordinary”, of the transcendence from the alienation defined in the colonial space of England, of London or Birmingham, and now, his sense of connection to a larger group, free from the alienating experience of the imperial centre. His “foreign nature”, however, is made apparent through the accent of his speech, and in his way, language itself becomes a conveyer of alterity, a means through which the performance of identity is expressed through this almost mundane feature of the performing subject’s identity. No longer a “social monstrosity” to be gazed upon through the horror of difference, Jabavu is still made aware of his outsider status, and this fact is the root from which his performance of self begins to establish a space of difference, a position of alterity from which he can act out the denial, signify at the myth of savagery that constitutes African-American perceptions of the African. As readers we sense the value of the intimacy of perspective that the diary provides, of how the unconscious dynamic of self-revelation embodied in autobiography, within this text of travel, gives us access to the perceptions of self and location of identity that an early black South African intellectual would have felt in relation to an other that shares a common colonial history with him. Particularly interesting is the difference in accent that Jabavu mentions between himself and the African-Americans that surround him, for it is in this fact of language that we find tangible evidence of the colonial metanarrative, a history of Empire and slavery that becomes manifest within this single moment of the diaristic subject’s musings on the social *setting* of Tuskegee. Jabavu’s *appearance* and *manner* are made apparent in the fact of his accent, yet his is not the resistant, even exhibitionist performance of the “social monstrosity” in London, but the connectedness of association to be found within the social situation of lunch at the Tuskegee Dining Hall. This descriptive moment represents a significant instance of unconscious, transatlantic connection between the self and other, a first sign of the relocation of identity that is to reach clarity in the descriptions of performance that come later in the diary.

We need then to establish some sense of the style of Jabavu's focalisation of the social situation of Tuskegee, and key to this would be to consider the *optic* of his representation of individuals – a hagiography wrought out through several decades of his writing lives. He skillfully connects the physical and personal qualities of the individual under description to their sociopolitical location and significance for wider society and, their relevance for history.

Jabavu describes Booker T Washington as “the most influential Negro everywhere” and that he was more favoured in the Southern states than the North, as the “social problems there are different; and the questions which agitate the more advanced coloured people are not capable of being magically settled by the gospel of work and money alone” (1920:66). In this, Jabavu seeks to emphasise Washington's practical philosophy and its particular suitability for the resolution of the racial and social problems of the South.

If we consider the status of Jabavu's diary as a text, it needs to be viewed in relation to the report on Tuskegee that he would write for the South African Union government and its transference in condensed form into *The Black Problem* (Jabavu 1920) which represented, I feel, Jabavu's formal ascendancy to political life. In this way we are able to confirm the veracity of the diary as a source-text for Jabavu's later writings on Tuskegee, to establish the time of its writing as sometime close to his stay at Tuskegee. Described as an “essay” (Gish 2000:215), the diary as text in the archive is a carbon copy of the original manuscript and is leather-bound, indicating that it was of value to its author. As we have previously noted, in his time at Tuskegee, Jabavu was primarily concerned with an inquiry into its methods of education and their applicability for a black South African proletariat. He was in possession of the portable typewriter that would have been used to write the diary and the 300-page “Report on the Tuskegee Institute” (Jabavu 1920:27; Higgs 1997:23, 187 n.236; “Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 55), to “learn the basis of the whole machinery of the methods employed in running the institute” (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 31) and commissioned by the Native Affairs Department of the South African Union Government.

Quite revealingly, Jabavu sub-titles his chapter on Booker Washing-

ton in *The Black Problem*, “What he [Washington] would do if he were in South Africa” (Jabavu 1920:27). This indicates how deeply Jabavu felt the suitability of the man’s practical philosophy and methods for his countrymen. In his coverage of Tuskegee in *The Black Problem*, Jabavu makes several references to Negro publications such as Washington’s pamphlet, “Working with the Hands” and George Washington Carver, Director of the Agricultural Department at Tuskegee’s brochure on the “results of some of his experiments in raising sweet potatoes for one year” (1920:48). Further, Jabavu lauds Carver’s didactically expressive style with its “plain, simple language, based on scientific principles” (1920:48) and “pithy, practical, and commonsense character” (1920:50). Jabavu chooses to gloss sections of it extensively, and the lengthy excerpts from Carver’s text that Jabavu includes in *The Black Problem* best exemplify his intentions for the black South African working class through the writing of the Tuskegee Report. I provide one of the excerpts from the Carver intertext here as one example of this notion of practical education:

‘While purely literary or professional education was not opposed by the white [Southern] population, it was something in which they [Negro men] found little or no interest, beyond a confused hope that it would result in producing a higher and better type of Negro manhood. The minute it was seen that through industrial education the Negro youth was not only studying chemistry, but also how to apply the knowledge of chemistry to the enrichment of cooking, or to the soil, or to dairying, and that the student was being taught not only geometry and physics, but their application to blacksmithing, brickmaking, farming, and what not, then there began to appear for the first time a common bond between the two races and co-operation between the North and South.’ (Jabavu 1920:50)

Clearly, such an approach to education is central to Booker T Washington’s notion of how race relations should be conducted and Jabavu would have felt that such a method would effectively resolve South Africa’s pressing so-

cial problems; the black proletariat, while espousing a self-help ethos towards education and labour, would fulfil the ideological and industrial needs of a white, colonial authority, that sought to maintain dominance of society through control of black education and the segregated, subservient position, of the colonised peoples of South Africa. This is a disturbing notion, given what it suggests about Jabavu's approach to the agency (or lack thereof) of colonised peoples, and this practical education which he so praises stands in stark contrast to the elitist, more abstract education that he received in the United Kingdom.

In *The Black Problem*, Jabavu limits his references to the American Negro and only suggests that the Southern small farming method be adopted by black South Africans (Jabavu 1920:3). Similarly, in a speech entitled "Native political philosophy" Jabavu only refers to Washington's aims for education and agriculture as the most relevant to him, and while he described the philosophies of Garvey and Du Bois, did not apply them in any significant way to the South African context. Jabavu's British education would frame his sense of self as an educator, and in *The Black Problem*, he compares the black South African learner to the Tuskegee student, the British education system to the American: "In comparing British education systems with the American there is an initial difficulty, for the Britisher, of finding out the approximate value of the American School grades" (Jabavu 1920:29). Jabavu found in Washington's methods the only suitable resolution to colonial authority in South Africa's hindering of the intellectual and political development of black South Africans. Importantly, and as other diasporic writers would do, Jabavu is at pains to observe the distinct similarities of social conditions between the American South and South Africa.

Certainly, debates around Jabavu's ideas about education and its influence on his intellectual and sociopolitical development remain central to any consideration of his early travels to the United States, given how they would frame the course of his journey and his life, and what he seeks to focus on descriptively in the diary. The "Report on the Tuskegee Institute" comprehensively describes the methods of education of Tuskegee and its inclusion in *The Black Problem* "reflected how deep an impression Tuskegee had made on [Jabavu]" (Higgs 1997:28). The admission receipts from the last concert that Jabavu held at Tuskegee were used to pay for the typing and

binding of the report and the Native Affairs Department described it as “a document of value which should be of real assistance to the Government when considering the question of Native education in the Union” (Higgs 1997:28), but due to the impending Great War, and perhaps the apathy of the colonial state, it was never published. Jabavu was reimbursed £72 for his efforts in July 1914 (Higgs 1997:187). Further, “[a] large proportion of [Jabavu’s] activities [at Tuskegee] [...] appear to have been of a social nature” (Higgs 1997:26), and it is in these moments of unconscious, descriptive self-revelation, that this chapter finds its primary focus after the extensive theorisation that I have provided.

On his return to South Africa, Jabavu was partly responsible for the establishing of the Native Farmers Association (NFA) in 1918 that is illustrative of the effects of Tuskegee’s methods on Jabavu’s intellectual and political development. As Khan (1994:506-507) notes:

One aspect of [Jabavu’s] life-long crusade was the promotion of the idea of the idea of self-advancement through sound agricultural practices. [...] The aims of the NFA were primarily to enable its members to become more productive farmers through agricultural education and training in modern farming methods. [...] Jabavu [...] remained closely involved with the Keiskamma Valley NFA and the SANFC until his death in 1959. While he was to find fame as a writer, political activist, musician and educationist, it is for his work as a farmer with a deep concern for the environment that he also deserves to be remembered.

It is this singular fact which exemplifies the flow of ideas from the American South to the rural Eastern Cape, a dynamic that indicates the degree of engagement on the level of ideas between transatlantic subjects separated by an expanse of ocean but not by a common history of grappling with the political and social impositions of the colonial master.

However, it is in the presence of Booker T Washington with his great reputation, that we find Jabavu unable to make any personal connections beyond the surface perspective of the visiting outsider. He is blind with ado-

ration for this political figure clearly larger-than-life to him. The lengthiest descriptive passage in the diary, however, opens with an engagement with Washington's home and the figure of his wife:

Washington lives in a palatial house with a romantic verandah, ducal comfort inside; Mrs [Washington] is a typical aristocratic coloured woman, tall, light of hue, turning grey, but the owner of a vigorous and noble figure. She is a blend of Yankee boldness, healthy fearlessness, with feminine charm and devoted zeal and energy, and has the best erudition and social culture that the States can offer; her conversation confirms this. Like her husband she takes learning not to be merely a matter of nebulous abstraction or sentimental philosophy but as a real joy for its being in vital touch with men and things, working for less fortunate brothers and sisters, and bringing up young and inexperienced girls in the right view of actual life. To meet her is palpably to feel the magic influence of a personality living in a region more serious than your little circumscription. You feel a better man and inspired. ("Tuskegee Pilgrimage" 28-29)

Mrs Washington is clearly the embodiment of femininity that Jabavu admires most and was perhaps to seek to find in his relations with women. She is deified to an "aristocratic" position that is congruous with Jabavu's elitist perceptions regarding the appropriateness of practical education for the black South African proletariat. Jabavu values her practical approach to learning, her "Yankee boldness" and energy that, while she is the finest manifestation of "erudition and social culture" leaves her with the common touch in her relations with those beneath her station. Importantly, and what gives value to this description of her, is the fact that she is connected to the social situation of her presence and we are not merely furnished with the personal details of her physical appearance and aspect. Through meeting her, it is clear that Jabavu has been in contact with the divine, for he is now a "better man and inspired". This hagiographical style is typical of Jabavu's descriptions of figures of social prominence and the lengthiest example of this is to be

found in his biography of his father (Jabavu 1922).⁴ It is important that we stress that the figure of Mrs Washington represents for Jabavu the ideal form of femininity, this matriarchal figure that is able to guide young girls in the direction of the submission to the dominance of patriarchy. Jabavu is writing at an early point in the history of modern gender relations, and the position of women was still one of subjugation at this time. Tuskegee was esteemed for its training of young girls in the domestic sciences:

The object of a complete household training for girls, according to Mrs B. T. Washington in an interview, is “to fit girls to make homes for themselves as well as for the communities to which they go. Though everything is taught in the line of Sewing and Millinery, emphasis is especially laid on Cooking and Housekeeping. The great cry among coloured communities is for girls who can cook scientifically, that is with efficiency, economy and commonsense; girls who can keep a house in proper order; keep rugs and mats in their proper places and proper sanitary condition; and girls who can see to keeping sheets, pillow cases and table cloths always *white-clean*...Black people everywhere in the world, I care not where, want to be taught cleanliness and neatness. These are virtues attainable only through training or inheritance; and this they either have not, or possess only in a small and negligible degree”. (Jabavu 1920: 44; my emphasis)

This extract is particularly revealing about the patriarchal gender dynamics embodied in Tuskegee and conveys much about the limits of Washington’s practical philosophy. It is itself subsumed under the weight of an accommodationist ideology that seeks to delimit the freedoms of the subjects that it wants to liberate and is in the word “white-clean” that we find symbolic evidence of this tendency. For Jabavu, it is apparent that Mrs Washington is the domesticated demi-goddess, keenly aware of the social imperatives that should guide the American Negro woman in the correct view of life. This consideration of the representation of Mrs Washington contributes to the context of our reading of Jabavu’s performances at Tuskegee and empha-

sises the counter-resistant position that Tuskegee sought to instil within its students. Margaret James Washington was an important American Negro leader and was her husband's "eyes and ears" during her husband's absences from Tuskegee. She was a keen social activist, ran the Tuskegee Woman's Club which was a forum of exchange between middle-class Negro women, and believed that racial inequities and points of tension in the South could be resolved through interracial cooperation (Rouse 1996:32, 37). As she once stated, "Let us make no mistake; let us realise that we are two separate races living in a country side by side, each equally responsible for the good citizenship of the country, and therefore each equally deserving of a fair chance and fair play in every way" (in Rouse 1996:38). It is interesting that while Margaret Washington saw the philosophy of work and the principles of good housekeeping as fundamental to the nature of Negro womanhood, she was also conscious of the need to establish a position of equality for the colonised subject, and despite the seeming objections to her and her husband's compromising principles, they both fought for the rights of African-Americans throughout their careers.

Jabavu suggested that Booker T Washington was an apolitical figure, more concerned with the success of his educational endeavours, yet still took notice of more violent acts of racial oppression, such as lynching and torture that occurred at that time in the South. Jabavu met Washington on 12 July 1913, though his first impression was somewhat disappointing:

[Washington] talks little. If he has anything like the average American loquacity he saves it for the platform and more serviceable spheres. Asked a question now and then; and off and on with me discussed some South African topic or other for his information. I reminded him of my meeting him in England, but all my cajolery and wiles to get him to expatiate on any theme were of no avail. The man seems buried in his colossal schemes and work for his fellow men and [...] in maintaining his influence, social relations with the venomous Southern Whites who might, on any false step of his, any unguarded utterance, not hesitate to blow up the Tuskegee Inst. with bombs, and lynch him and his students in a single

night and demolish and annihilate the whole Industrial city.
("Tuskegee Pilgrimage" 29)

Jabavu's words effectively evoke the social climate of the time, as he was able to observe similar social conditions to that which he had experienced at home. He found an inspiring voice in the work of Washington, blindly admiring the father figure embodied in the archetypal stature of Washington. Washington is distant, almost silent, and this is indicative of the tentative connections between the two. Clearly, Washington may be exhibiting the social distance established through colonialist perceptions of Africans, yet a curious sense of intimacy is achieved, however, in Jabavu's description of some of Washington's physical features:

His personality like that of other illustrious figures eludes analysis. It is esoteric. He is best known by his achievements, by his oratory, and by his publications, all of which are nearly synonymous with his Tuskegee work. In person, his firm and massive lips bespeak unconquerable determination; his sinewy neck, strength and doggedness; his bull-like eyes, piercing penetration. (Jabavu 1920: 64)

Jabavu is enthralled by this patriarchal figure of black social progress. This is evident in his use of a steadfast tone with adjectives that convey a power and force of personality: "firm," "massive," "unconquerable" and "sinewy" are words which suggest a towering leader, a man who inspires his people to achieve through the progressive and self-valorising message that he espouses. It is interesting to observe, however, Jabavu's fetishising of these aspects of Washington's body, and it appears similar to the coloniser's mode of the appropriation of the colonised subject's body. This again brings into question the location of Jabavu as a colonised subject – an unusual set of relations between two colonised subjects that results in the one having to colonise the other. Implicit in this is the fact that Jabavu's youthful position of defence and uncertainty leads him to establish an unconscious state of mastery between himself and the larger-than-life figure with which he is trying to connect. Perhaps he is conscious of his location as an African, and the percep-

tion that is held of him by this Negro leader. Is he employing the discourse of the coloniser to appropriate an experiential space for himself within a foreign place to reassure himself of the certainty of his agency? Further, he goes on to valorise the degree of Washington's independence of spirit:

An inflexible earnestness of purpose, overcoming all obstacles, has galvanized [Washington's] career. Fundamentally he believed in his work, and believed it to be worthy beyond estimation. All of his interests have been subordinated to this belief, not in a philanthropic way but as a bounden duty of life. He set out to do something; and he has always remained constructive. From friend and foe he has learnt, and has always been willing to learn. Far from devoting much of his time to retaliation he has used adverse criticism for bettering himself and his work. (Jabavu 1920: 64)

In this description Jabavu negotiates the fundamental tenets of Washington's practical philosophy and the tendency towards hagiography becomes more apparent here. This representation of Washington as almost messianic, blind to the limits placed upon him as a colonised subject, suggests a principled man whose only concern is the conduct of hard work and an openness of spirit. You will recall Jabavu's initial meeting with Washington as a disappointing one, as Jabavu was not able to move beyond the boundaries of a formal conversation with someone of significant social standing. However, nearing the end of his stay at Tuskegee, Jabavu had a more positive meeting with Washington. This took place on the afternoon of Saturday, 16 August 1913:

He is geniality personified and presented me with two of his books. We briefly discussed a few outstanding questions such as the Rand Mine Strikes, the Native Peril from this as indicated by a leader in the Boston *Transcript*. The cause of the European dread of Natives in South Africa, the relative populations; Friends at Street Somerset, England; the Negro Business League Conference from which I am kept back by

financial considerations (Railway journey of about £6!) prospects of the 1915 Tuskegee Negro Conference. (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 45)

By this time, Jabavu’s entries in the diary have become rather fragmentary, and they do not possess the extended descriptive efforts of his previous accounts of African-American life. It is interesting to note his representation of South Africa to Washington and their conversation regarding race relations. Yet the nature of the conversation still remains rather impersonal and I do not think that anything further than a cordial relationship between the two men developed—very different from the letter exchanges that were to ensue between Plaatje and Dr Moton. Perhaps Washington sees the youthful Jabavu as nothing more than another visiting curiosity from Africa, though we are unable to ascertain the true nature of their exchange given Jabavu’s constancy of tone in the diary. Washington was very familiar with John Dube, the Zulu leader who founded Ohlange in Natal, and there was a “profound resemblance in the ambiguity of their posture” on matters of relations with colonial authority, for “[a]mbiguity was the essence of survival” (Marks 1975:180). Washington’s methods, in the view of his critics, were “essentially an educational blueprint for black subordination” (Higgs 1997:24), yet Washington was able to fashion a place (albeit a separate and limited one) for African-Americans within a deeply racist society. It is this ambiguity that defines Jabavu, Washington and Dube’s relations to colonial authority, the ambivalence of location that Bhabha has defined with regards to mimicry; the discrepant disavowal and appropriation of the metanarrative of colonialism. Within Jabavu’s disconnected representation of Washington we sense the disappointment that he may feel because his reception by the man has been nothing more than the formality of a casual engagement. If considered within the context of Jabavu’s constancy of tone in the diary, his disillusionment at not being the centre of attention does not seem surprising. It is in his musical performances that he was able to gratify his need for social recognition, for “[i]f Booker T. Washington personally proved a disappointment to Jabavu, Tuskegee was not” (Higgs 1997:26).

Throughout his life Jabavu was passionate about music, an avid player of both the piano and violin. His mastery of music is another sign of his attempts to signify at the colonialist ideologue while also an act of his embracing of western culture and its musics. Possession of a musical instrument also suggests a mark of “social status [...] instruments may become insignia of that status. [...] Musical instruments can be markers of culture, as well as status; they can also imply the status of gender” (La Rue 1994:189). Musical instruments as symbolic expressions of civility and their connection to social identity are a complex matter and Jabavu’s mastery of these instruments self-consciously signifies his mastery of Western culture. This also suggests something about his elitist location and personal sense of social distance from the rest of the Xhosa society that he would return to in 1914. This fact emphasises yet again something of the ambiguous nature of a character like DDT Jabavu; he is at once bourgeois yet also conscious of his responsibility for the political and educational life of his people. As Eric Naki (2004: 14) notes of Jabavu’s home (which apparently still survives) at the Annshaw village in Middledrift in the Eastern Cape:

One of [Jabavu’s] possessions, still standing in the corner of his sitting room, is his favourite piano. It was the same piano that DDT played in (*sic.*) a ship on his return from London. [Naki] was reminded at [a] function [held] by the professor’s step-daughter [...] the soul still living and looking after the dilapidated house, that while DDT was stringing the piano, some of the British passengers on the ship commented, “Come and listen to Dr Jehova playing his piano.”

This delightful, yet rather dubious fact of history, serves to reinforce much of what I have said with regard to Jabavu’s youthful, exhibitionist tendencies. We sense that the Jabavu family’s historical importance and location still features within the public sphere. Within the context of the aura of history, such a quotidian detail is an important fact of the remains of Jabavu within the popular South African consciousness. In his article, Naki is at pains to emphasise the family’s continuing legacy and the minor diaspora that con-

stitutes its scattered members, across Africa, and in the case of Noni Jabavu, the United Kingdom, though she returned to South Africa and was present at the family reunion that Naki mentions in his article.

On Friday, 18 July 1913, Jabavu attended an evening concert for the teachers of Tuskegee. He noted a “good recitation on ‘Rubinstein’” and mentions a reception and dance that followed that performance. As he writes: “Hot as it was I joined with zest in every dancing turn I could with a fresh partner. I flabbergasted the Americans with the quickness with which I assimilated and mastered their dances even to a point of exaggeration and burlesque” (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 34). Fascinating is the delight that Jabavu takes in the emulation of African-American dances and the surprised gaze of the other. This is the youthful exhibitionism of the cakewalk on the Colwyn Bay pier, yet it is also a symbolic gesture towards Jabavu’s attempts to locate himself within a foreign space, the traveller desirous to establish a social rapport with his hosts. He delights in his ability to make himself known to the world. He does this, for instance, when he speaks Xhosa “to the amusement of all” (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 50) at a social function, and is very conscious of his effects on this audience. The “exaggeration and burlesque” of his performance suggests that he is not simply weighed down by his African identity or his position as outsider, but finds hilarity in his ability to destabilise colonialist notions of the primitive African subject. Within the moment of performance Jabavu is able to transgress the limits of his condition of alterity and becomes the absurd mimic man of a doubly colonised cultural identity that seems youthfully uncertain about the space of its own intentions. This is a moment of cajolery, mockery of the limits placed upon his identity because of his position as an outsider. He is signifying at the assumptions placed upon him, attempting to transgress the boundaries of his perceived identity. This is not the “direct confrontation” of an act of resistance, but the more subtle performance of a denial of colonialist assumptions of race and behaviour. While not the casual speech act that Mitchell-Kernan and Gates establish their notion of Signifying within, it is similarly spontaneous in its effects and is thus a silent moment of resistance. We must also be aware of the mark of civilised culture (La Rue 1994) conveyed in Jabavu’s playing of the violin, of how in addition, his dress, speech and social manner were employed as the physical means by which he was to signify at the limits of

prejudged behaviour placed on him because of his Xhosa, African identity.

It is in the most extensively described musical performance of Wednesday, August 13, 1913 (See Figure 7), that we find Jabavu's most intimate engagement with his African-American audience. Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how Jabavu sought in his lecture preceding this performance to destabilise the myth of "Dark Africa." This performance becomes the stage for that disavowal, rejection of the colonial metanarrative of Africa.

Jabavu begins:

I come in amidst cheers and struggle heroically to banish stage fright [...] The night is very close and warm and I am already perspiring profusely and I am now busy with my towel-like handkerchief [...] The lively opening bars [of 'A Sergeant of the Line'] animate the expectant listeners because this is a vigorous type of song unfamiliar to the negroes here who are preoccupied either with the time-honoured and mechanical ragtime, the recurring *decimal* chorus of the Jubilee Hymns or else sentimental songs. *My voice is in its best mettle and I control it as flexibly as one manipulating the concertina. I rise above the handicap of an upright piano which needs tuning badly.* The applause is uproarious and spontaneous. For the encore *is inevitable and I willingly rise and hand* the music to Miss Meek, my dainty, refined and clever accompanist, to negotiate 'Young Tom o' Devon'. This goes down equally well and *I have so conquered* the audience *that they are now on intimate terms with me.* ("Tuskegee Pilgrimage" 39-40)

We sense the arrogance and confidence of Jabavu's tone. There is also the evident tension between what has been included and omitted (italicised text) in the subsequent editing of the text. This dissonance reveals something of the tensions between the performing exhibitionist and the subject trying to establish a sense of place in a foreign space. Reference is also made to the Jubilee Hymns and the ragtime, though these cultural forms are reduced to a monotone regularity that stands in contrast to what Jabavu feels is the far more engaging quality of his musical repertoire. He is the heroic figure, fac-

ing the arduous presentation of self as an outsider yet finds affirmation in the “uproarious and spontaneous” response of the audience. Again, he deploys the colonialist discourse of dominance and conquers the audience to a degree that they are now on “intimate terms” with him. We must, however, question the terms of this intimacy, for in the act of signifying at the other, Jabavu feels that he is transgressing the boundary of difference between himself and them. He must conquer in order to emotively connect with his audience, a fact that latently reveals some of his nervousness and the instability of location as a performer.

Clearly, he feels that he needs to colonise the performative and social space in order to confirm his attainment of civility as an African to this audience. This is a strange dynamic, for while as a colonised subject he is symbolically resisting the coloniser’s narrative of him he does so by utilising the coloniser’s discourse and mode of behaviour while performing to an audience of American Negro, colonised subjects. This makes his performance deeply problematic for it seems at odds with itself, part of, yet disconnected from, the ambiguous space that is the ambivalence of colonial discourse. These tensions in his youthful identity, this ambiguity, became manifest at the moment of performance, of self-representation, and he maintains this tone of self-congratulation throughout this performance. As he continues:

My dear Violin has never sounded better and this tropical heat has so loosened my finger joints that although I had lost a six weeks’ practice I feel I am playing at my best. I am at home altogether, my tremolos send palpable sound-waves through the auditorium; no speaking [...] no stage fright; I am filled with the courage of Mischa Elman [...] My accompanist is an angel only without wings. She is perfect not only in her personal aspect and millinery accoutrement but in her mental and musical capacity. The understanding between us is telepathically ideal. She is not a demi-semi-quaver ahead or behind me. Both in time and sympathy we work like clockwork machines and we begin and finish the piece absolutely together. The applause is thunderous. I take a well-earned rest. The girls chatter like fledglings in a nest. The men are restless with their surprise and de-

light. (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 41)

In this representation there is only an overt confidence and a lack of self-doubt and ease of pose that leaves us to question the veracity of this moment of self-description. Again, the metaphor of the conqueror is sustained as Jabavu mentions his “courage” and the profound connection that he feels with his accompanist, the aptly named Miss Meek. The response of the audience is again, rapturous, only serving to confirm Jabavu’s confidence while he conveys the excitement of the audience. If this performative text is also a performance itself, we again sense that the ‘diary,’ again, is not meant as a device for self-reflection, but is rather a public act of self-confirmation and this musical performance, its stage of self-aggrandisement. Yet, as we observe, Jabavu is not uneasy in this space or conscious of the need to prove himself to his audience:

Word by word I watch the listeners follow my verses *whilst I reproduce them and the melody from memory. [...] I feel like a hero and conqueror. I bow with a mock-modest smile, as much as to say “It is too good of you, but I do not deserve it at all”. I return to the stage and accidentally arouse merriment by colliding with the low-suspended electric lamp. The joke profoundly appeals to the girls and they laugh with an unrestrained joy to which I must confess [gives] encouragement [...] With difficulty I freeze the atmosphere of laughter and flippancy down to an appropriate icecold [sic] solemnity and studied seriousness. I sing it, as far I can, with the dead earnestness of the lady singer in Florence Barclay’s novel on “The Rosary”. I get through it, and the popularity of the rendition is immediate.* (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 41-42)

While this “hero and conqueror” is clumsy in his movements, this only serves to encourage him as the audience has established the relationship of intimacy with him as performer that he claimed earlier on in this record. He does, of course, need to re-establish the “solemnity and studied seriousness” that is the audience’s full attention to his movements and he again confirms his popularity as performing subject. We must also be conscious of

the amount of text that in editing he chose to omit from what might have become a separate publication. However, I think given the arrogance and self-aggrandizing tone of the text, he would have found it rather difficult to find a market for it. If we move beyond simply reading the performance as an act of signifying, we also sense the youthful delight that Jabavu takes in the spectacle of the very public reflection of his African, ‘civilised’ self. Next, he moves on to his performance of the “The Whistling Solo”, writing that the

contrast is an agreeable one indeed, for Teresa del Riego’s “Happy Song” is the most joyous vocal ebullition that I have ever known in Soprano Songs. The accompaniment is a wonderful combination of musical intricacy with a vivacious irresponsibility and originality—all not subordinate, but coordinate with a soprano air of spontaneous gaiety and calisthenic rhythm. To this delightful compound is added a bird-like warbling trill *which evolved by unguided industry, I had eventually worked up to a certain standard of professional art. The novelty of the item placed me in the confidence of my hearers, for that time Pres. Roosevelt himself could well have envied me at this particular time and under these particular circumstances. The volley of hand-clapping was irresistible and I repeated the number accordingly.* (“Tuskegee Pilgrimage” 42-43)

Returning to the notion of the diary itself as performance, one also senses from the florid quality of Jabavu’s language that he is consciously posing for the reader of the text and in the moment of the performance itself and his pomposity in many ways limits our ability to in any way sympathise with his larger cause in the motivation behind the performance itself. As he concludes:

I was deluged with applause [...] The congratulations overwhelmed me and for the first time I realised the meaning of the American hand shake which all Presidents and heroes are obliged to undergo. It was hands, hands from every quarter. Compliments lavished were unreserved and extravagant as

they were spontaneous. I select two at random:- J. T. Williamson, "You exceeded my expectations". Mrs. Williams (Matron) "I have heard plenty of Negro singing here in Baltimore and other parts of the States but I have never heard such singing as yours" [...] [A]ll feel delighted. All other evidence available points to one single impression of favour and desire for a subsequent recital. ("Tuskegee Pilgrimage" 43-44)

Generally, the reception to Jabavu's performance was a positive one and he "charmed the Tuskegeens with his violin recitals. The *Tuskegee Student* reported that Davidson was 'pleased with his visit and at finding much here that will be of help to him in his future efforts' to educate South African blacks. Washington himself was so impressed that he wished the South African could stay on at Tuskegee" (in Chirenje 1987: 138). On a later, 1931 visit to the United States, to a missionary conference at Buffalo, New York, one commentator described Jabavu as "[indisputably the outstanding Bantu leader of South Africa today [...] A sane man, well balanced, self-controlled. A jolly man, with a rollicking laugh [...] a truly lovable man [...] that's Jabavu of South Africa—a Christian gentleman [...] Everybody liked him—because they sensed his friendliness and knew he liked them. 'A vibrant and engaging personality,' said one newspaperman—a white" (Cushing 1932:93, in Higgs 1997:71).

* * *

We have already noted the cajolery, the mocking and counter-hegemonic tone of any act of Signifying. Jabavu achieves something of this outside the descriptions of his musical performances through the ironical fashion in which he represents African-American social culture and religiosity. He is ever conscious of his location as an outsider. On Sunday, 17 August 1913, Jabavu attended a church revival meeting, the description of which reveals much of his approach to the explication of African-American religious and cultural life:

The strained shouting of the preacher I could hear a mile

away whilst going there! He preached in a musical cadence as Welsh preachers do, only his lung power was extraordinarily great and brazen; more wonderful to me was the length of time he kept this up without any apparent physical exhaustion nor tendency to getting hoarse. Mystically impressive was the foot-stamping and musical improvisation in ragtime rhythm and cadence in harmony with the preacher, maintained by three effervescent women who rose by turns in palpably hysterical fits, and marched up out of their pews right up to the preacher and shouted at him "Preach the gospel my friend!" expressing their appreciation of his heart-searching harangue and then backwards and forwards in their pews, shrieking to the utmost of their voice and dancing so wildly that their hats fell from their heads. More hysterical gymnastics. This is the good "old time religion". ("Tuskegee Pilgrimage" 46)

Through this description we sense the delight that Jabavu takes in the representation and experience of this moment of the exaggeration and burlesque of the performance of the preacher. The sense of mockery is suggested in such phrases as "[m]ore hysterical gymnastics," "palpably hysterical fits" and the alliterative quality of the "heart-searching harangue" of the preacher's mode of religious delivery. As a reader what delights me most is the emphasis on rhythm in the description, a kind of musical energy that drives much of his focal consciousness as autobiographical subject in the diary. Also curious is the transposition of savagery onto the behaviour of the "three effervescent women" and the description possesses a markedly condescending tone that establishes a clear sense of distance from the subjects being described. This means of description is suggestive of the dynamics of colonial representation, which Jabavu is clearly emulating, with its detached, scientifically composed description of the Other. This is also compounded by the hilarity and mocking tone of Jabavu's general description of the event. Ironically, the African-Americans themselves become the subject of curiosity.

Certainly this moment also reveals some of the severe limits of the text given the self-aggrandising tone of its author. As I have argued before, the value of the text lies in its representation of the experiences of a black

South African subject among others who encountered the African-American social, political and cultural. By reading Jabavu's self-representation as performance we are able to establish contextual and relational connections between several experiences of music in the diaspora. Jabavu was skilful in his manipulation of society through his position as outsider, which brings into question the connections between the private and public intentions of his performances of self, musical and social identity at Tuskegee for three months in 1913. His vivid account of the racial prejudices of the South and the innumerable lynchings that took place at a time of heightened racial tension only serve to emphasise the value of the text as a vital historical and experiential record of this significant moment in African diasporic history.

Jabavu left England for South Africa on September 17, 1914, and his voyage would be marked by the racist treatment that he was subjected to by South African whites onboard. In the "Copy of South African Newspaper Account of Mr Don Jabavu's voyage from England to the Cape" (in the Jabavu Crosfield Collection, received 1915 and untraceable to the original source), it is mentioned that Jabavu played the piano on board ship for a largely white audience (yet another instance of his delight in the admiration of public spectacle), and several South Africans sent "a request to the Captain to the effect that the 'nigger' be removed from the top deck and socially ostracised." The captain denied their request and Jabavu was clearly delighted but by the time of his arrival at Cape Town on October 8, 1914, Jabavu had realised to his consternation that his "flannels [...] and University College blazer," the Signifying marks of his education and acculturation of Western civilisation, could not shield him from this "the well-known ill-bred colonial negrophobism of the southern States of America and the Transvaal" (in Higgs 1997:30). (See Figure 9.)

Jabavu's use of the same strategies of self-representation onboard ship to South Africa that he had employed in his musical performances at Tuskegee would be of no use to him on his arrival in the country. He had left a very different country in 1903 and would return to the recent imposition of the Natives Land Act and a renewed programme of racial discrimination. This was no longer the Cape Colony of the qualified franchise but now a repressive social order that would in its humiliating fashion lead to the maturity of Jabavu as an intellectual. He would maintain, throughout his life, the

image of the cultured presence of the academically clad 'Professor' Jabavu while writing against destructive Native education policy and maintaining his presence and contact with the world. The moment of youthful performance both at Tuskegee and onboard ship would be formative of his maturity into the public figure of leader of the All Africa Convention in 1936 and writer of three significant Xhosa travel narratives. It is these achievements that secure his place as an important early, mission-educated black South African intellectual, and the primary reason for my consideration of his representation of self through musical performance at Tuskegee in 1913.

Jabavu returned to South Africa with a classical literary education from the universities of Birmingham and London, a sense of Christian service and morality developed through his time at the African Training Institute and Kingsmead College, and his research and report on the methods of education and instruction at Tuskegee. His work at Fort Hare from 1916 to his passing in 1959 were part of his life's greater "mission [...] to spread the news of the benefits of education not only to his own students, but to all who would accept the logic of progress through education" (Higgs 1997:30).

* * *

Notes

1. Another black leader of the time, Thaele was one of the last southern African students to travel to the United States before the Great War, enrolling at Lincoln and then Pennsylvania University (Campbell 1993:303).
2. In African-American women's travel writing of South Africa of the period the arrival in Cape Town harbour by ship remains a common, central metaphor, for the arrival within the African geographical space. All commentators establish the event as central to their journey, it possessing both emotional and historical significance for them. See Jackson Coppin (1913).
3. "Jubilee Singers," *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 16 October, 1890.
4. Consider DDT Jabavu's description of James Aggrey, who undertook a tour of Africa in 1921:

I was privileged to be closely associated with him in part of his travels in my district and thus was enabled to study at first hand his captivating personality and his versatility as a public speaker. He gave addresses, each of a distinct stamp to suit the occasion, all strictly practical, never nebulous but always to the point. He excelled in the art of concentrating his thought on one specific topic, finally gathering up his argument, getting it home to the hearts and minds of his listeners with Quintilian effect. His method of extempore speech without the slightest note-paper for reference invested his discourse with a genuineness that astonished his audiences, compelling their admiration. Without doubt he has done more than any other visitor I know of, in the brief space of time, to persuade people in our circumstances of the necessities of racial co-operation between white and black. (in Smith 1932:165-166)

Figures

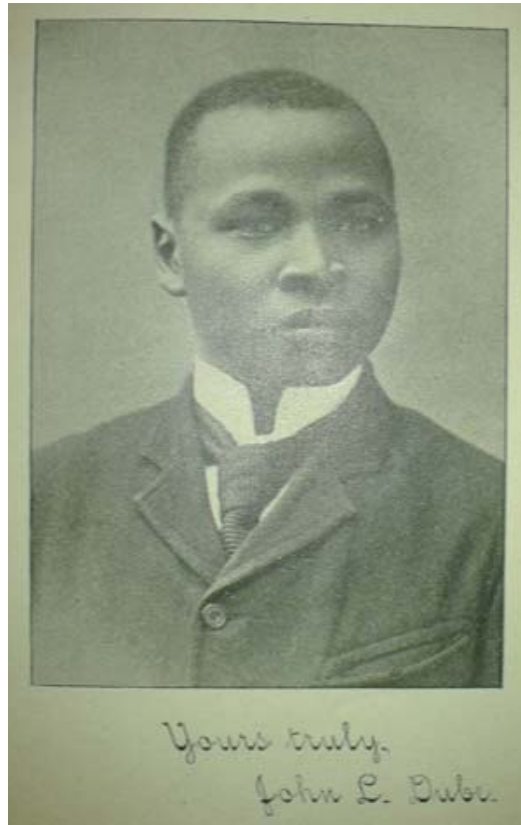


Figure 1



Figure 2

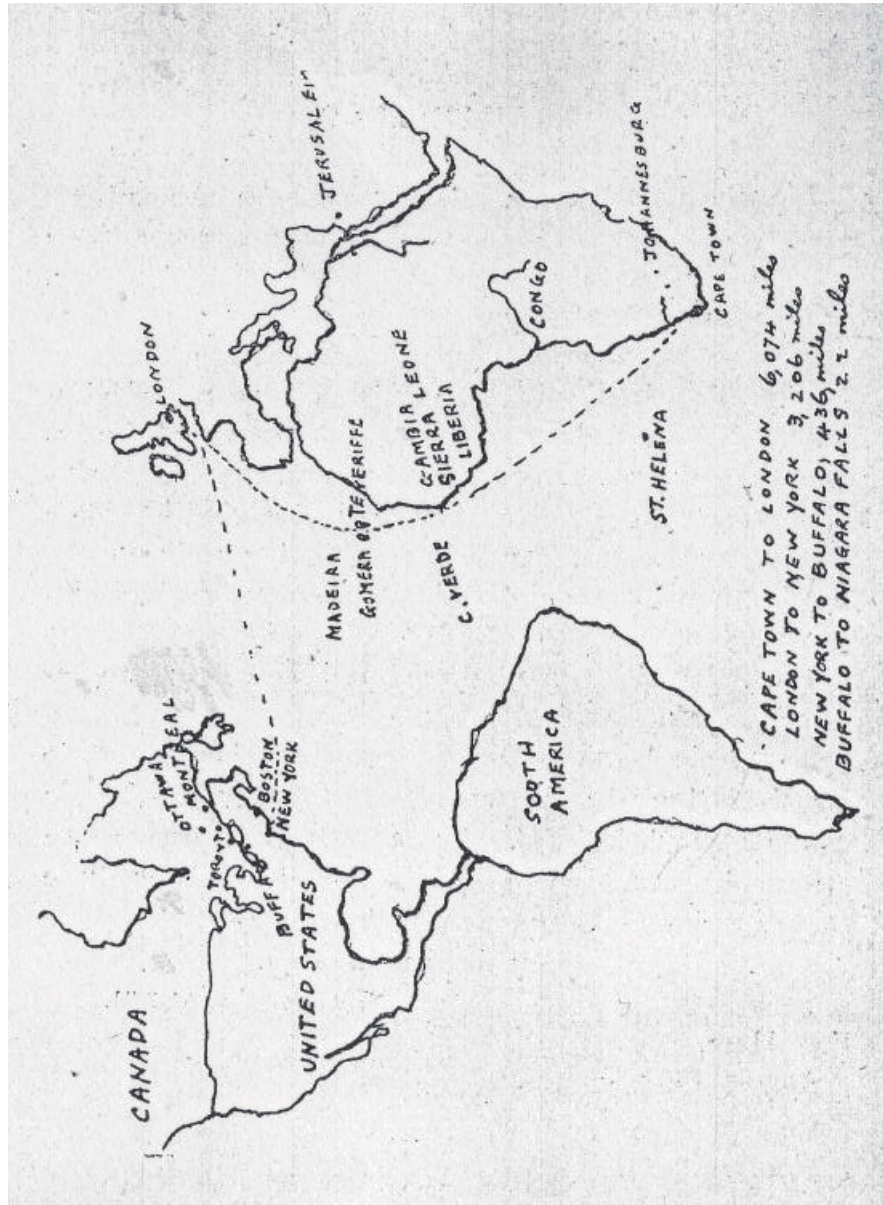


Figure 3



Figure 5



Figure 6

RAVU, B.A. (London)
 DAY, AUGUST 13, 1913
 SKEGG-INSTITUTE

Piano Solo.....Prelude in D Sharp Minor.....*Rachmaninoff*
 Song.....A Song of the Life.....*Squire*
 Violin Solo.....Home Sweet Home (with.....*Karmer*
 Song.....Yaffil.....*Jerzon*

No rose in all the world until you came
 No star until you smiled upon life's
 No song in all the world until you spoke
 No hope until you gave your heart to me

 O rose, bloom ever in my lonely heart!
 O star, shine steadfast with your light divine!
 Ring on, O song your melody of joy!
 Life's crowned at last, and love is over mine.
Fischerbacher

Whistling Solo.....Happy Song.....*Teresa del Rio*
 Violin Solo.....Intermezzo.....*Mascagni*
 Pianoforte Solo.....Polonaise Militaire.....*Chopin*
 Song.....A Yeoman's Wedding Song.....*Poniatowski*

Accompanist: MISS EZELLE MEEK

Figure 7

Musical Recital

By Davidson Jabavu, B. A.,
(London University)

PROGRAM

Song—"A Soldier's Song" Mascheroni
Violin Solo—"Home Sweet Home" (with variations) arr. Farmer
Song—"Until" Sanderson

No rose in all the world until you came;
No star until you smiled upon life's sea,
No song in all the world until you spoke;
No hope until you gave your heart to me.

O rose, bloom ever in my lonely heart!
O star, shine steadfast with your light divine!
Ring on, O song your melody of joy!
Life's crowned at last, and love is ever mine.

—TESCHEMACHER

Pianoforte Solo—Prelude in C Sharp Minor Rachmaninoff
Song—"Thora" Adams
Whistling Solo—"Happy Song" Teresa del Riego
Violin Soli (a) Serenade Gounod
(b) Heimliche Liebe Resch
Song—"A Yeoman's Wedding Song" Poniatowski

Part II.

Lecture "South Africa"

SYNOPSIS—Some erroneous ideas about Africa and how they originated—The real facts—Geographical peculiarities and influences—Contact of Africans with American Negroes—Africans in England—Present conditions of social, religious and economic life of South African natives—Hopes for the future.

M. E. Smith, Printer, 1730½ 4th Ave.

Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

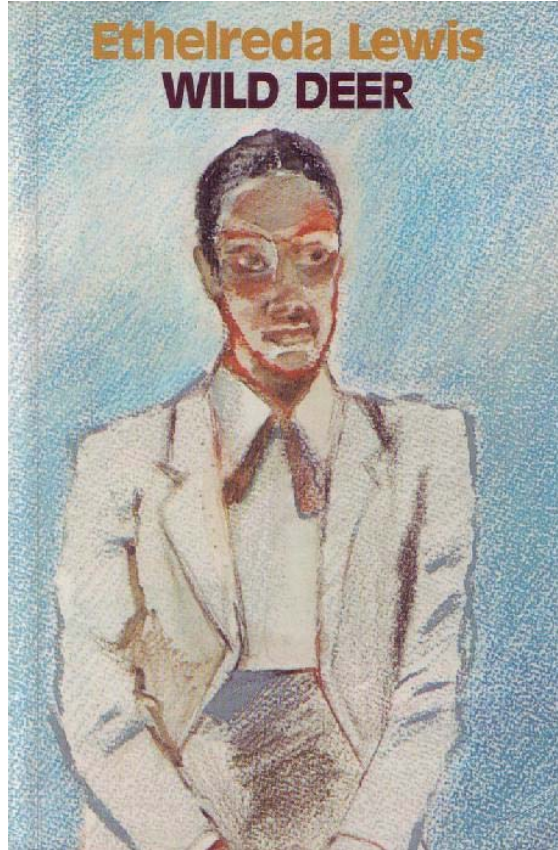


Figure 12

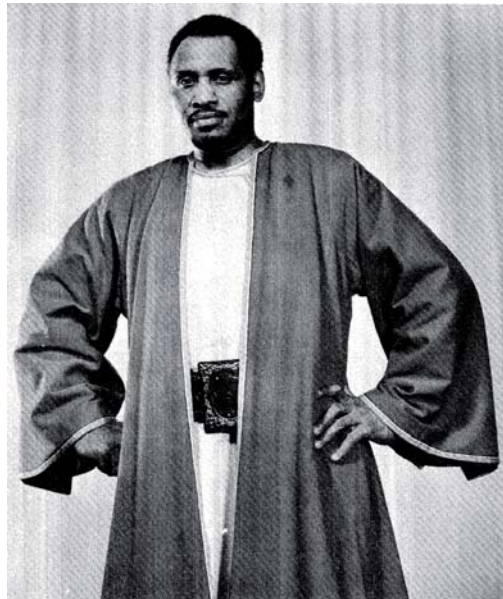


Figure 13

The 'Faces' of Robert de la Harpe: Ethelreda Lewis's Sources for Imagining

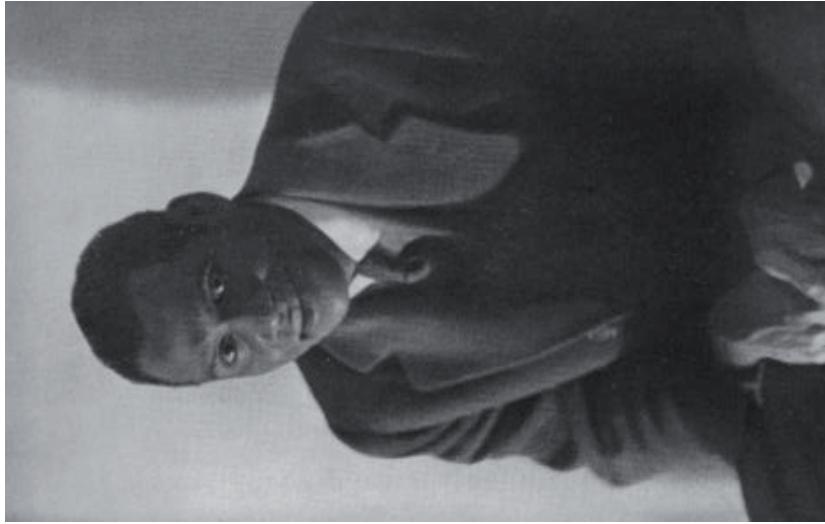


Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

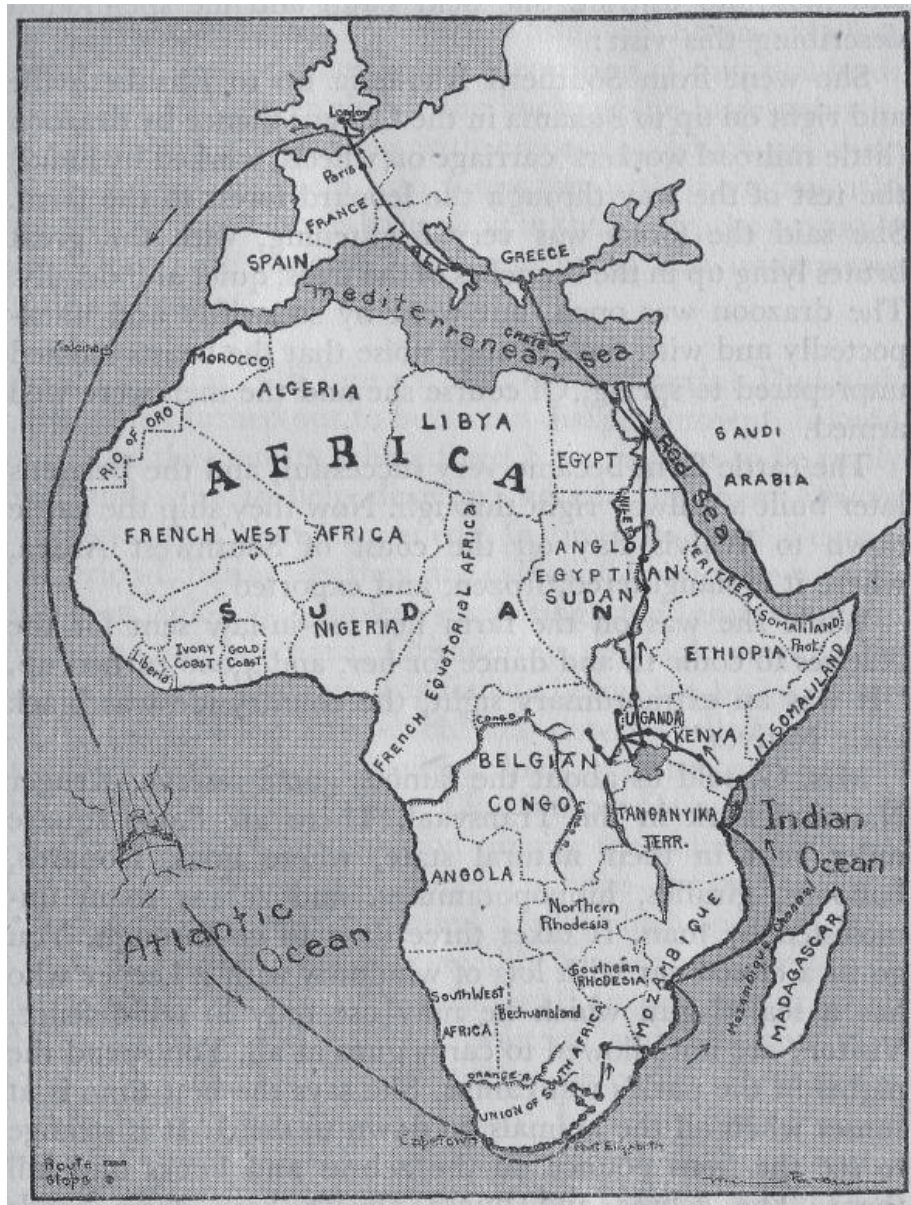


Figure 17

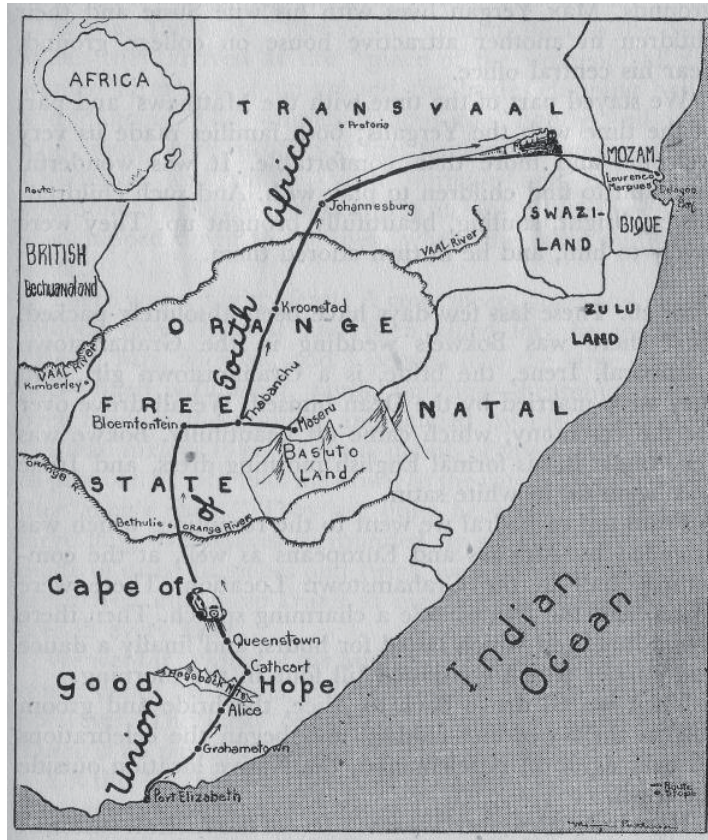


Figure 18

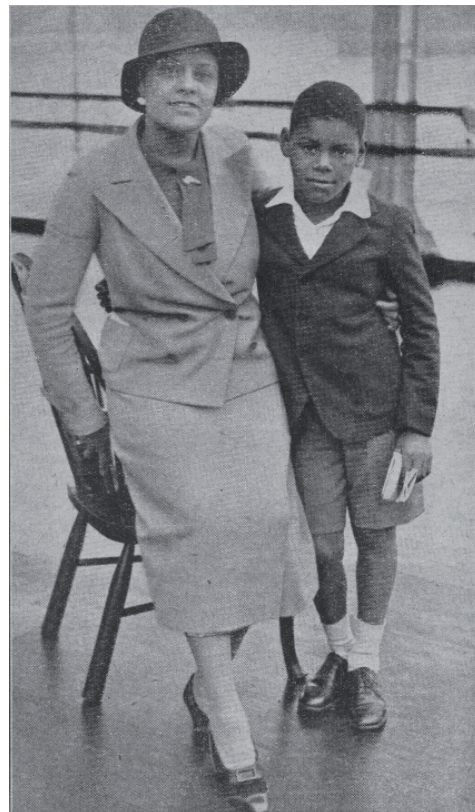


Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21

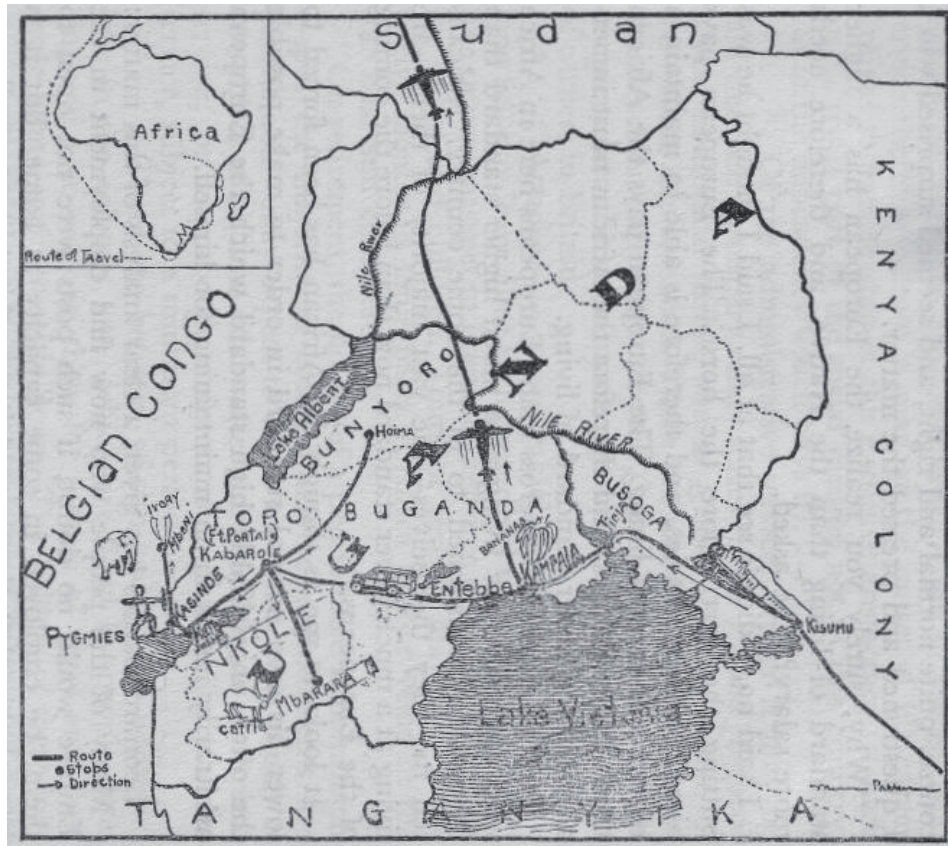


Figure 22

Chapter 4

IMAGINARY JOURNEYS, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS:
READING LIMINALITIES, LIMITS AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN
SUBJECTS IN ETHELREDA LEWIS'S *WILD DEER*

'Why do you hug and kiss Christophine?' I'd say.

'Why not?'

'I wouldn't hug and kiss *them*,' I'd say, 'I couldn't.' At this
she'd laugh for a long time and never tell me why she laughed.

Jean Rhys,

Wide Sargasso Sea

Dr. Louis Leipoldt, Ethelreda Lewis, the missionary Henri Juno, and William Plomer meet for a tea party in which colonial views of gay desire on the mine compounds are discussed. Ethelreda expresses the view that black migrant workers had become "apostles of civilised vice!" who spread "the disease of the white man over the face of wild Africa".

Apostles of Civilised Vice (documentary) plot summary,

Zackie Achmat (director)

Ethelreda Lewis's writing and life were shaped by a nomadic imagination and political commitment. Voyaging in mind and body became a form of self-discovery for Lewis, through her meditations on the metropole and the colonial periphery in her writing, both non-fictional and imaginative. The metaphors of pilgrimage, a "quest" (Lewis 1933:15), vocation and salvation are distinct features of the narrative of *Wild Deer* (1933), the novel under consideration in this chapter. We see this in some of her fictional subjects, such as the itinerant adventurer, Trader Horn; in the series of the same title that Lewis wrote in collaboration with Augustus Aloysius Horn; the black American musician figure Robert de la Harpe (see Figure 12) who features in *Wild Deer*; and *Four Handsome Negresses* (Lewis 1931), a narrative about the fifteenth-century Portuguese colonial enterprise on the southern African coast.

In *Wild Deer*, the visit of an African-American singer, Robert de la Harpe, to South Africa is imagined as taking place around the 1920s and

early 1930s. He had “seen a vision that [...] brought him ten thousand miles, to the country of his origin” (48). There is a kind of blooming of the self for him, a form of spiritual awakening, when he realises that his ‘real’ purpose in Africa is to return to his ‘roots’ and father a new ‘race’ of African people. The sexual act with a young black African girl who is devoid of agency or humanity takes place purely for the purposes of reproduction. Copulation represents the single act of artistic purpose and the climax of the novel. *Wild Deer* concludes at this point: de la Harpe, through sex perceived only from his perspective and not from that of the girl, has created a new ‘race’. Through his own act of return to the prelapsarian state of rural bliss near the conclusion of the narrative, de la Harpe ‘goes native’. He returns to the ‘motherland’, which he has sought out through the departure from the United States. He does this in the interest of propagating a black African race that will be gradually initiated into ‘civilised’, urban life.

He becomes restless near the mid-point of the novel’s action and has become sick of spirit because of his peripatetic restlessness: “In the black hours he suffered. He felt himself flying over the endless waters of travel, of the human scene, with no rest for the sole of his foot” (163). He has become tired of the international singing career that has been his making and is desirous to be bound up in one place. At once a historical romance, the ‘return’ to Africa signifies a spiritual quest that is noble in virtue yet for the reader unrealistic in purpose and imagining. The irony of this is that the very lack of fixity and uncertainty that Lewis is setting out to resist through narrative is that which characterises her colonial identity.

Lewis is the only ‘white’ subject/writer under consideration in this study. Formerly Ethel Howe, Lewis published under the pseudonym of R Hernekin Baptist (see Figure 11). She published under this pseudonym to “hide away from a name, her own name, that was world-famous” because of the *Trader Horn* series (Couzens 1984:vi). Born in Derbyshire in 1875, she arrived in South Africa in 1902 with her newly married husband, Dr Joseph Lewis, and lived in Bloemfontein from 1916 to 1922 and then in Johannesburg. As Couzens (1984:vii) notes, she began to write seriously in her forties and returned to England in 1923 with her first, recently completed novel, called *The Harp* (1925).

The nomadism, restlessness, in Lewis’s work, is central to the narra-

torial selves through which Lewis negotiates her identity as a white colonial woman writing in the world. The multiple journeys she undertook, both corporeal and imaginary, signify a *mélange* of geographical, cultural and aesthetic projects, both in her oeuvre and in her life. Lewis shifted between cultural spaces, caught between Europe, her birthplace and Africa as ‘home’. Much of her writing, both fictional and factual, is concerned with the antipodal. “[S]erious white writers” of the time (and I would include Lewis here despite her non-canonical status, since she was an important voice in her day in South African literature) were engaged in “struggles, hesitations, and retreats, involving questions of belonging to Africa or Europe, in which collisions occur[red] between attachments to the great English, or European, culture and attempts to establish indigenous convictions” (Chapman 2003:173). The “colonial inferiority complex exaggerates the worth of anything European” (Couzens 1987:40) and writers such as Lewis felt a ‘debt’ to their European heritage, yet were able, with varying degrees of success, to imagine new, ‘indigenous’ forms of literary and cultural expression that effectively mediated between the tensions of colonial space and ‘mother’ country. “As the young Yorkshire novelist Winifred Holtby [a writer in Lewis’s circle] found when she visited South Africa a few months earlier in 1926, colonial [South African] society, starved for a hint of intellectual, metropolitan glamour and fed by its own inferiority complex, lionised [the] visiting artist [Nobel laureate-to-be John Galsworthy] at the drop of a hat” (Couzens 1992b:26).

Lewis was also writing at the time when modernism in Europe and the United States was gathering momentum. Though the modernist movement was formally recognised in South Africa in the 1920s through the painting of Maggie Laubser and Irma Stern, the aesthetic approach in the country was lagging behind the avant-garde movements in the imperial metropole; it was “conservatively romantic-realist” (Merrington 1995:644). We could see Lewis as part of a network of the latter modernist-Edwardian associations; she had a voice there, though a lesser figure, in the spaces of modernism. She always writes at the edge of the possibility of cultural translation and intercultural understanding. The central argument of this chapter is that Lewis’s thought and imaginings (limited by a conservative ideology) in *Wild Deer* possess a distinctive liminality – indicated chiefly in Ruth Grainger’s

revulsion at the thought of interracial sex and de la Harpe's choice to 'go native', as I have termed it, and reach for one side of his identity; that which has been ripped asunder by the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade.

The liminal state is characterized by openness, ambiguity and indeterminacy. In this condition, this position, the subject's sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation. Liminality constitutes a moment of transition where conventional, stable limits to thought, self-understanding, and behaviour are transgressed. Such a situation, the one towards which Lewis was at the point of, but unable, to enter, an ameliorative situation would lead to new perspectives, new designations and comprehensions of the Other. This explains the fractures, the contradictions and flaws in Lewis's thinking. She is a white colonial subject of the liberal school of the 1930s. She does not complete the transition to interracial understanding, for it is not fully possible given her socio-historical context and upbringing. Those who remain in that purgatorial state between two other states may become permanently liminal. In the act of 'writing between' Lewis imagines the Other rather than undertaking the material act of travel. Her version of difference, as I shall show, is an idealised one. However, in the act of imagining the journey of a black subject, *Wild Deer* stretches the normative definitions of travel writing.

To live on the threshold of such possibilities renders such a conservative subject irrelevant to the concerns of post-apartheid canonicity and leftist scholarly and political interests in the present. In her attempts to negotiate the divide between black and white otherness, Lewis and her fictional self in the form of Ruth Grainger, remain on the edge – on the threshold of interracial, or intercultural understanding. Thus, in the liminality of the cultural and intellectual position of the novelist we find the limits of an imagination concerned with negotiating cultural difference but failing in the final intent. These limits must be acknowledged in the reading of the text, while the places in *Wild Deer* where this dynamic is revealed is in Lewis's representation of the discussions and associations that de la Harpe and Grainger share, both onboard ship from England to Cape Town, in that city itself and subsequently in Johannesburg. Symbolically, as I shall show, de la Harpe must escape this from this uneasy point of instability, where the ambivalence of colonial discursive practices is revealed (see Bhabha 1994), and where the

African-American musician must return to the 'roots' of his identity; an ideational Africanness that shall remove the scourge of racial and cultural hybridity that has been formative of his identity in the New World.

There is much that is contradictory and ambiguous in Lewis's race thinking and imagining. Lewis is aware of the oppressive, dehumanising nature of the history of slavery and its aftermath, and her fictionalised self in the form of the character Ruth Grainger describes the West African coast as "the place of sacrifice, of the burning bush, the shore of unwilling footsteps" (34). While she ignores the complexity of slavery's effects on black American people, she constantly refers to its evils and her fear that contemporary South African race policies instituted by the white regime would be tantamount to those of historical import. She seems nation-bound, essentialist in her thinking, but sets out to imagine the nature of the transnational connections between African diasporic peoples in *Wild Deer*. But the black African subject must know his/her place in the scheme of history, while the African-American subject must bring forth the light of civilisation attained from the legacy and experience of slavery. This is similar to Jeffersonian thinking (Kazanjian 1998) on the need for black Americans to return to Africa to their roots, on the same routes that had taken them forcibly to the Americas, and with the intent, in Lewis's case, of diverting the local African population's intentions of following a course of resistance to white colonial hegemony. This suggests that a figure like de la Harpe is the conveyor of the imperative of capitalism to black South Africans, that the impact of African Americans on black South Africans was about disseminating capitalist ideals as a value of modernity. Yet despite Lewis's attempts to enforce the lines of difference and otherness between white and black subjects, the novel can be seen as an exercise in Lewis's (perhaps unconscious) desire for the black male subject (signified in the form of a Paul Robeson-like performing figure).¹ This is constructed through a conservative colonial discourse. Apart from this conservatism Lewis also sets out to explore the relationship between colony and mother country, and much of her writing is concerned, in seeming contradiction to the impulses and desires already set out, with a nomadic condition and the representation of the Other.

This shares a common yet oppositional relationship with postcolonial conceptions of nation and culture. Homi Bhabha, for instance, argues

that nations and cultures must be understood as “narrative” constructions that arise from the “hybrid” engagement of competing cultural and national constituencies:

It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. [...] Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. (1994:2)

A moment of historical transformation is being narrated in the action of *Wild Deer*, which, while narrating the presence of the white minority colonial authority on a majority black African populace, indicates in the sensibilities of the author an attempt to conceptualise a new political dispensation that is more egalitarian. This project fails, of course, in the privileging of the dominant position of one group over another, and we read this descent into inequality in relation to contemporary postcolonial conceptions of culture that conceive of difference in more dialogic, equable terms. The “interstitial perspective,” as Bhabha calls it (1994:3), replaces “the polarity of a prefigurative self-generating nation ‘in itself’ and extrinsic other nations” with the notion of “cultural liminality within the nation” (1994:148). Hybridity, liminality, “interrogatory, interstitial space” (1994:3) – these are the positive values Bhabha opposes to a retrograde historicism that continues to dominate Western critical thinking. We must, he argues, dismantle such thinking with its facile binary oppositions. Rather than emphasizing the opposition between coloniser and colonised, First and Third space, homosexual and heterosexual, black and white, men and women, Bhabha would have it that we should focus more on the fault lines themselves, on border situations and

thresholds as the sites where identities are performed and contested. This is what makes a consideration of Lewis's fiction, and especially *Wild Deer*, within the normative post-apartheid/postcolonial South African context of today, so vital. Of course, the 'postcolonial' condition has not been achieved in the country because of the unequal power relations between classes evidenced in the unequal access to resources. New conceptions of nationness, and especially that which Bhabha espouses, challenge us to interrogate essentialist textualities that do not fit comfortably with the political correctness of the present. We cannot arrive at any comprehension, any comprehensive analysis of national culture and literary history, without invoking contesting voices. For Lewis, the failure of cultural translation implies not only a failure of the imagination in *Wild Deer*, but also a fascinating gesturing towards the negotiating of disparate histories and the invoking of rights for the majority. In other words, while Lewis's vision might be binaristic in conception, at the moment of its writing, it is attempting to do something quite unusual, rather unstable.

The inclusion of Ethelreda Lewis's voice, a white woman writing the white colonial presence in South Africa in the 1920s and 30s requires some justification within the context of this study. Lewis does not fully allow for the *possibility* of a transnational black identity that she gestures towards throughout the novel. Though de la Harpe, the novel's protagonist, has been born and brought up in the United States, he remains for her a black man whose ties to African black people are an essential part of him. Through the act of imagining the white colonial woman's friendship with a black American musician, Lewis is presenting interaction with and attraction to the 'other'. Because of her politics, Lewis defines the purpose of de la Harpe's visit in spiritual and aesthetic terms. *Wild Deer* is in part a novel of ideas in its imagining of the ideal black musician figure's visit to Africa; part autobiography because of Lewis's presence in the character of Ruth Grainger, and part expression of latent desire by the white female for the black male subject. The novel is in many ways a narrative of pilgrimage and a text of self-sacrifice; a novel of the danger of black rebellion and actual riot by Afrikaner supremacists; and an historical romance.

To reason the inclusion of *Wild Deer* here I begin from the theoretical space of representation and the complexities of cultural analysis. Edward

Said questions “whether there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they *are* representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer” (1985 (1978):272). The initiator of discourse (he is writing of the colonialist, who is a subject in Lewis’s *Wild Deer*) is central to Said’s argument in his study of *Orientalism* where he seeks to dismantle a legacy of empire writing. Within the context of this study, while Eslanda Robeson is concerned with a critique of European colonisation in Africa and is a black American, Davidson Jabavu and Ethelreda Lewis remain advocates (if even unintentional in both cases) of its continued existence in the first half of the twentieth century. In many ways Jabavu represented the black partner in white liberalism in the Cape Province political tradition in South Africa (see Higgs 1997). Simultaneously muting his advocacy of expansion of the limited Cape franchise for a select group of Africans, Jabavu opted to go along with ‘liberal segregationism’. Lewis’s project in *Wild Deer* was to portray the possibilities for black people of such policies. In Jabavu’s case, however, the justification for his support of liberal segregationism was to forestall stricter segregationism.

In this chapter I place Lewis’s work within a distinct socio-historical context, that which allows the postcolonial reader to understand that her ideas of race and of relations between racial groups belong to a particular era. As I argue in this chapter, we need as twenty-first century readers to dismantle her colonialist thinking, and acknowledge that at the time of the novel’s publication, it appeared enlightened. There are few references to her work in present-day criticism: her writing, apart from Wendy Woodward’s analysis of *Four Handsome Negresses*, has only been of interest to Tim Couzens and Jack Kearney (2003). Woodward (1990) stresses the importance of giving critical attention to novels like *Wild Deer* that because of their colonialist preoccupations have been disregarded by scholars. She writes that South Africa’s “literary history will remain one of lacunae” (1990:147) if this act of critical return is not undertaken in order to refigure the progress of that history. Lewis is not mentioned in Michael Chapman’s *Southern African Literatures* (2003) and appears only as part of a footnote in Martin Duberman’s (1989) biography of Paul Robeson. This is due to the eccentricities of her writing style, her work’s unfashionably colonialist overtones. Couzens’s his-

torical introduction to a reissue of *Wild Deer* in 1984 is the only substantive historical and critical commentary on the novel. The re-publication of the text was part of an attempt in the early 1980s to give canonical breadth to the emergent corpus of South African literature. Such a programme of “reclamation and rediscovery” (Hofmeyr 1985:333) constituted the recovery of ‘forgotten’ and formerly banned works. This project is part of the “shifting and contested terrain” (1985:333) of literary and cultural change, and the chief justification for the consideration of *Wild Deer* in this study.

The writing of the novel is as much an act of self-representation for Lewis as one of the imagining of an African-American singer’s visit to South Africa. She can only engage with the ‘other’ through the act of fiction writing; this is the reason for my focus on the autobiographical tendencies in the novel because this is the point at which she encounters the black ‘other’. Said’s deconstructionist rubric is useful when considering *Wild Deer* as an object of analysis. Criticism may have moved on since 1978, when Said published *Orientalism*, but it still provides a means by which postcolonial scholars can understand the ways in which Europeans represented the colonised. “Some criticised the practitioners of colonial discourse analysis for their lack of political will. The strength of their project, though, was to “connect the signifying system [of colonialist discourse] to social forces, and overtly ally their writings with the victims of imperialism’s violence” (Parry 2004:17).

In refiguring the archive of South African literature, as I discuss in the conclusion to this study, we cannot confine ourselves to the voices of those whose beliefs remain acceptable to us. In our search for comprehensiveness and chronology, we cannot select authors by race or reject them because of their politically incorrect leanings. I propose that we understand them as bound up in a web of historical discourses where opposing voices and cultural identities react to one another. There can be no “truths” [1985 (1978):272], Said argues, only formations or deformations. The “implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven” [1985 (1978):272] nature of the analysis I undertake is unconcerned with critical discourse analysis. My own critical position requires that we acknowledge that the subject exists in relation to the social, but is also the agent of action and may initiate change in an association with marginal groupings. These margins and centres thus exist not as polarities, but in the power relations in society. The individual is im-

agined as a subject, who “is the effect of a production, caught in the mutually constitutive web of social practices, discourses and subjectivity; its reality is the tissue of social relations”. Any analysis that is attempted “must refer to the specificities of the different practices in order to describe the different subject positions and the different power relations played out in them” (Henriques *et al* 1984:117). An analysis such as my reading here does focus on Lewis’s race, gender, or political position.

I do not argue that my approach is the only one that can be used: the reader may wish to consider feminist psycholinguistic theory that might lay bare “deconstructive ruptures within the colonial text” (Woodward 1990:63-64). Such an analysis is a response to phallogocentric modes of post-colonial analysis, and in the feminist/Kristevan approach involves *inter alia* “the question of pornographic desire; the cultural insertion of the subject into the masculine symbolic; and the vestigial preoedipal relationship of the subject to her mother” (1990:64). I allude to this critical alternative because of its use in the analysis of colonialist texts such as Lewis’s writing, where her unstated desire for the black male subject is as a recurrent feature, especially in *Wild Deer*. I shall attempt to place the author as an immigrant from England to South Africa, and as a settler-colonial voice imagining the relationship between African-Americans and black South Africans on her terms. At the same time, she sees herself as a voice adjacent to the African-American cultural space.

* * *

In her imaginings of the Other, Lewis is located betwixt and between the possibilities of cultural translation. She can only empathise with black South Africans to the point at which her own hegemonic position, as a white woman colonial is not threatened. *Wild Deer* signifies a failure of cultural translation and of the imagination. Lewis’s “incessant, spurious theorising [in the novel] is frequently supported by ostentatiously mythopoeic devices” (Kearney 2003:103). The text is no so much a fiction, a work(ing) of the imagination, as it is a novel of ideas, a means through which the writer negotiates her sense of place in a changing world, where the certainty of the British Empire has begun to wane after the increasing power of the Afrikaners in civil so-

ciety and commerce. In most attempts and forms, cross-cultural discourses are unattainable because they “[require] a certain amount of self-effacement, perhaps a suspension of one’s own stance, at least for a certain time, in order to listen to what the others are trying to say” (Iser 1996:302). The purpose of this chapter is to read beyond our understanding of Lewis’s now outdated political views, which are apparent in the non-figural narrator of *Wild Deer* and in the colonialist-racist moralising which give the novel a “tedious” and “hectoring” quality (Kearney 2003:109). I shall however engage with Lewis’s semi-autobiographical insertion of herself into the text as Ruth Grainger. Other white characters stand as metonyms for important figures in history: Brand Colenbrander, for example, whose “name is well-known in South African history”, seems to be a fictionalised version of the trade unionist William Ballinger, as well as the name of a Voortrekker, and the nurse who attended to Lewis’s husband in 1931 (Couzens 1984:xiii-xiv). We are also concerned with Lewis’s representation of the African-American subject’s relationship with Africa.

Lewis appears to feel that the partially human African subject, able only to respond to the performative and immediate as represented through their responses to de la Harpe’s performances, has had an infusion of the superior intellectual qualities of the African-American. She is suspicious of ‘educated natives.’ The metaphor of pilgrimage forms the formal basis for *Wild Deer*, which is nevertheless concerned with the perils of miscegenation, or “race-mixing” (Blair 2003:583), while Lewis unconsciously reveals the repressed and hidden desires of a white woman for the black male. Though such desires are declared in the novel to be ‘unnatural’, the text still achieves some exploration of them. In writing the novel, Lewis demarcated an opposition between the public, or artificial, female self and the private, or ‘genuine’, one. With a sustained attention to sexual, national, and racial ambiguities and a variety of characters and events that blur political rigidity, *Wild Deer* enriches the discussion of the relations between gender and colonialism, and helps define the particularity of early twentieth-century concerns in South Africa. We must attempt what I call a ‘situated’, contextually aware reading that is always conscious of the novel’s status as a ‘miscegenation’ text.

Wild Deer, while a ‘miscegenation novel’ indicates a commitment

towards easing the 'native' into the challenges and complexities of civilised behaviour and culture. The character Colenbrander, for example, who is sensitive to the concerns of black people, introduces de la Harpe to the 'savages' of Africa. This stands in stark contrast to Lewis's representation of wealthy white mine owners who exploit the labour of black African men. She comments on the deceitful characters that engage in feigned acts of public charity to establish their reputations as benefactors of black people. This is *Wild Deer's* redeeming feature and, for this reason, it demands a reading that moves beyond the limits of the text as colonialist discourse from the critic.

Lewis's representation of the white liberal and of the role that the black American might play in South Africa is the preoccupation of this chapter. She sees in the metropolitan space the decay of morality and civilisation, and Johannesburg is presented as its analogous and equally corrupt colonial offshoot. As the South African Dora Taylor comments, "in leading the Negro singer into an unspoiled corner of primitive Africa and making him deliberately sacrifice his career to stay among those whom he considers his own people, the author² leaves no doubt where he wants the emphasis of the novel to fall; it is on the crime committed by Western civilisation against the African" [Taylor 2002(1942):56-57]. Africa's 'black children' must return to their prelapsarian, rural roots.

Writing from her porch in Parkview, a suburb of Johannesburg, in the 1920s Lewis sought to negotiate the contradictions of colonial identity in her prose: the tensions between the 'old' world of European experience and the 'new' world of the "South African environment" (Chapman 2003:173) are apparent throughout. She believed firmly, in line with Cynthia Stockley, another British colonial woman of the period, firmly that "[i]f Africa's emptiness invites creativity which only the metropole can command, the ordering which Africa's people require is at the disposal of both the English and the colonial-born" (Chennels 2004:80). Lewis's attitudes may be compared to Stockley's, who writes in her novel *Poppy: The Story of a South African Girl* (1910) what I believe is another fictional life-writing of 'home' and 'exile' at the limit of white subjectivity: "As soon as I got out of sight of Africa [my roots] began to pull and hurt. [...] [I]t always came upon me worst in [Paris and London]. I used to be sick with longing for a glimpse of the big open spaces with nothing in view but land and sea" (1910:75). It is the open

spaces of Africa that provide a sense of relief from the claustrophobia of the metropole.

There is the same “sickness” of spirit in Lewis’s reaction to Europe. Her ambivalence is present in *Wild Deer* in her admiration for the rural black lifestyle, and her sense that Grainger (the combined fictional version of herself and her friend, Winifred Holtby), the white liberal woman who, I have mentioned, meets de la Harpe onboard ship at the beginning of the novel and continues an association with him, can never share it. My research project demands that I focus on the representation of de la Harpe as the figure of the African-American performer. Scholars who, in the interest of negating colonialist representations of Africa as the ‘savage continent’, ignore the complexities of the representation of whiteness and masculinity might reject this claim for the importance of her text. Current post-apartheid criticism demands that we read beyond the binaries of race and gender that proscribe a focus on distinct subjects as requiring the critical interrogation.

Wild Deer, written in Lewis’s final years (Couzens 1984:xxviii), possesses a “retrospective” quality. In the end, the messianic figure of de la Harpe is over-simplified and therefore unsuccessful. The novel is further marred by its proselytizing and its essentialising of race, particularly in its eugenicist ending: the boundaries of racial difference are confirmed, and Lewis reveals a fear of the black urban subject and a simplistic admiration for rural life, to which the ‘desired’ black subject must return. Eugenics is today often associated with racism. It was not always so; both WEB Du Bois and Marcus Garvey supported eugenics or ideas resembling eugenics as a way to reduce African-American suffering and improve their stature (Guterl 2002:9).

Lewis was always aware of the injustices that the colonial presence in Africa had inflicted on colonised subjects, through the legacy of slavery and contemporary subjugation. She inscribes her sense of self through Ruth Grainger in *Wild Deer*, and, with less success, through de la Harpe. Ruth’s intercontinental status, so like Lewis’s own, is dramatised in her journey from England to South Africa; she is a white liberal, a “negrophilist” (23)³ in her concerns. She reveals this in conversation with de la Harpe (to which I shall turn later in the analysis); as well as in her perception of the culture of the ‘other’. Lewis herself exhibits her own views on race in her delineation of black South African subjects as childish and immature. *Wild Deer* becomes

a site for contesting histories of the relationship between African-Americans and their origins, as well as an ideological vehicle for Lewis's white colonial politics. For the purposes of her project, which is that of imagining what role a black American can play in Africa, she imagines the 'ideal' black American musician. His presence takes on an almost messianic purpose. However, in the end, his noblest function is that of procreator of a new, pure 'black race' that reverses the legacy of a history of slavery in America, and the cultural and racial hybridity that have been its results. For Lewis, the return of the black American subject to the 'mother' continent is a chance for that dislocated, diasporic subject to perform the presence of a 'civilised' person to the colonised black masses, who are never defined as *real* or as individual. The African-American will rid himself, however unconsciously, of the ambiguities of *métissage* and return blackness, at the symbolic level, to its former purity.

Lewis's first novel, *The Harp* (1925), introduces the themes that would come to preoccupy her for the rest of her writing career. It deals with miscegenation and interracial sex, demonising both through the use of character, plot and savage/animal sexual imagery. The character Andrew Falconer discovers that his wife, Dora, has had a sexual relationship with a coloured man, because the child that is born is of mixed race, though Lewis is unable to recognise this in the text, only referring to the adulterous actions. It is the shock of the young nursemaid, who on seeing the child runs "shivering to her room" and is "shaken cold with nausea" (Lewis 1925:126), which conveys this revulsion. She "cries her heart out as she lies on the bed" (1925:126), not only for the white colonial master that has been betrayed, but also "for her mother and father, for her little white room at home, for quiet, safe voices, under the small roof" (1925:127).

The symbolism is clear: the white body has been sullied by blackness through the lascivious actions of the white female subject who is unable to control her desires. This fear, this warning of the need to preserve the sanctity and purity of the white body, and to control the lower forms of desire and embodiment, layer Lewis's representation of her fictional autobiographical self in *Wild Deer*. In *The Harp* the results of such unnatural actions are devastating. "Placed against the white body of his mother, Charlie [the coloured child] is a reminder of the black or coloured body that engaged

in sexual intercourse to sire him” (Morgan 2004:116). The horror that is revealed later in the narrative, to emphasise the moral message and fear of interracial sexual desire that Lewis is writing of, is when it is established that Dora’s sexual relationship with the coloured man was consensual, rather than an act of rape as Andrew had assumed.⁴

The plots of *The Harp* and *Wild Deer* are similar in some respects to other South African ‘miscegenation’ novels of the period,⁵ which I shall discuss below. Peter Blair (2003) traces the history of the discourse and control of miscegenation by the white South African colonial authority. He mentions novels such as Gibbon’s *Margaret Harding* (1911) and William Plomer’s *Turbott Wolfe* (1965 (1925)). Plomer’s novel caused a “scandal” when it was first published (Blair 2003:591). Its protagonist is the most “exuberant advocate” of resistance to distinctions of race and their preservation in colonial policy (2003:591). Wolfe finds in miscegenation the only alternative for the white race’s survival in Africa. He avoids the problem of difference through rejecting distinctions of race. However, he finds the mutual attraction between a white female and black male character disgusting. The paradox that defines Lewis’s political-intellectual position is that while distinctions of race should be rejected, the matter of interracial sexual relations provokes revulsion amounting to taboo. As Wolfe reflects, “I was intestinally sick, as at a catastrophe. [...] It was one thing to talk glibly about miscegenation, to fool about with an idea, and another to find oneself face to face with the actual happening: it was the difference between a box of matches and a house on fire” [Plomer 1965 (1925):142].⁶

Like her friend Sarah Gertrude Millin’s *God’s Step-children* [1986 (1924)] Lewis’s *Wild Deer* contains ideas of Social Darwinism and racial purity. Miscegenation refers to both cross-racial marriage and interracial sex, and Lewis’s novel espouses a position that rejects both as unnatural acts. Lewis’s ‘race thinking’ is problematic. When de la Harpe and Grainger meet in Goldberg (Johannesburg) later and are sitting in her mother’s drawing room, he announces his impending departure from South Africa and she expresses her dismay that their efforts have not resulted in a course of practical action. “Talk” is of little value to Grainger and she despises the “academic crowd” with their “scientific” detachment from the concerns of the real world: “Trying to learn the savage mind through science instead of by learn-

ing first to speak his tongue. Teaching the history of a race, while the worst climax in his history is being made under our noses" (226). She is frustrated by the fact that white liberal intellectuals are disconnected from the social reality of the "pass anti-native laws" and seems unable to make any changes. She (and Lewis) is to be lauded for her conscience and call to action.

Wild Deer presents a black transatlantic identity at an early stage in the formation of legal segregation in South Africa, when it was still possible that American blacks could bring 'enlightenment' to South African blacks. But it is also an anti-miscegenation text, similar to several others of the period which speak of the dangers of racial and cultural hybridity and "embod[y] a fear not merely of interracial sexuality, but of its supposed result, the decline of the population" (Gilman 1985:107). The novel sets out to affirm the racial boundaries between black and white people in South Africa, while extending the meanings of 'race' and Africanness with the arrival of the African-American subject on the continent. In the 1920s and 1930s "[t]here was broad support in South Africa for 'race purity', even among liberals [...] but the biological variant of racism remained a fringe phenomenon" (Giliomee 2003:386). This "biological variant," racism, as the basis for the unequal treatment of different race groups seems to infect Lewis's representation of black South African identity in *Wild Deer*. This element has led to the neglect of Lewis's work by leftist and other postcolonial critics, and the plot of *Wild Deer*, and especially the ending of the novel, does much to justify their dislike.

For Lewis, the writing of the novel and the ideas that she sets out in it suggest that the return of de la Harpe (the black American male subject) to Africa is, in the end, to be guided by a single purpose: that he might merge his inheritance with that of the local black people to create a new race. This is part of the restorative act of returning the American black race to its original purity, leaving behind the hybrid cultural contacts and entanglements in the Americas, whilst infusing 'civilisation' into the African. De la Harpe then mentions the "sacrifice" that Grainger has made in appearing in public with him (227). In the subsequent, longing gaze between them, they are unable to "break through the guard of the conventions, the old tabus [sic] which separate black from white. They probed deeper, trying to pierce the baffling mask of physical differences of pigment and feature. They must, for

once, look only upon the heart and the mind that are made in one human mould" (227-228). Grainger's thinking is situated at the edge of interracial possibility, liminal yet profoundly worded for its time. Even the imagining of such a possibility that the black subject could be human, though only in the form of the civilised African-American subject, is in advance of its time.

Lewis cannot transgress this conservative cultural location because of the time at which she was writing. De la Harpe suggests that marriage would be of little use to himself and Grainger because they "could never care for each other physically" (229). Grainger's response to such "brutal information" is to abruptly return from her flight of fancy of attraction to the 'other' and she says that, according to de la Harpe's terms, she "should be [his] mistress in name only" (229). There is some form of attraction between them, but expressed in the interests of 'the cause' or, marriage as a means of producing inter-racial harmony. The thought of such an act is 'unnatural' and it provokes physical revulsion. They agree to remain friends, however, and from that point the fascination of them for each other is set out; a desire to know the 'savage' roots of their races, but from there they return to the boundaries of physical racial difference. There seems in this proposal and the discussion that follows a deliberate repression of desire in the white female subject for the black African-American male. At the same time there is a reassuring assertion that black males are not attracted to white females. And the black *American* male subject is the only one in whom Ruth Grainger can express any interest, as black Africans remain unnamed, not fully human. Lewis's ideas on race were not dissimilar to those she was writing against for "the idea of an African race is an unavoidable element in [pan-Africanist] discourse" and "these racist notions are grounded in bad biological – and worse ethical – ideas, inherited from the increasingly racialised thought of nineteenth century Europe and America" (Appiah 1992:x).

De la Harpe is impressed with the Malay people, who are 'pure' in their racial origins when compared to many "colonial families that have a streak of Hottentot blood" (44). They are a "strong people [with a] strong [Islamic] religion" (70) and have "clear-cut Eastern features and olive skins" (70). De la Harpe cannot believe that they were once slaves. This is an interesting claim for it has implications for the claims of white Afrikaner or the 'Dutch', as Lewis calls them, to racial purity. For Lewis, and for de la Harpe,

the Malay are the most engaging non-white presence in *Wild Deer*. De la Harpe will later discover in his symbolic 'return' to the wilds of the African interior that that is where he belongs though is superior to the fictional Macas people to whose level of civilisation he must 'lower' himself. He has "no point of contact, no sense of blood-relation" (71) with black Africans. Though he had come to South Africa to convey the message of racial freedom to white men whom he has "never felt inferior to" (70) he "hoped to with the confidence of the African native" (71) as well.

It is apparent at times that Lewis is unaware of the fact that many black Americans are 'coloured', being of mixed racial origins, and her position is sometimes confusing. One coloured woman, Old Regina, the cook at Father Macmichael's mission station [the clergyman who meets de la Harpe at Cape Town harbour and who "has been tilting against the colour-bar for years" (100)], is shocked to learn that upon hearing de la Harpe sing that he is not a "white gentleman" (73) and is most unsettled by this. During his cycle of performances in Goldberg de la Harpe encounters Maggie a "stout smiling coloured woman" (151) and her family. She reminds de la Harpe of his grandmother of whom she is "little more advanced than" (150) and mentions her family's past and their experience of similar conditions of slavery to that of the black American singer. "My grandfather was a slave when he was a boy—in the Cape," she says, and shows de la Harpe an old chair that she possesses from the period with a name and date: "*Petronella du Plessis, geboren Januar 1794 bei Plaisir du Merle, de Kaap*" (152). De la Harpe mentions that he has seen the slave-bell that called Maggie's grandfather to labour at the wine farm. This moment clearly connects the two through a common heritage and their roots in a legacy of slavery: "The two dark people gazed at each other, drinking of the deep well of knowledge, of kinship and the cry of the blood. [...] A warm sense of the dignity of this old coloured woman, of her grandfather the slave, coursed like reviving wine through his veins" (153). While de la Harpe identifies with coloured people through a common history of slavery, in the mind of Lewis the hybridity that defines the formation of both groups, of both 'races' for her, is not evident and indicates an ignorance on her part of the complexities of history and transnational cultural formation. This is concomitant with her racial essentialising that frames the action of *Wild Deer*. There is an act by the novelist of writing against

interracial hybridity, sexual practices and the impossibilities of cross-racial marriages. *Wild Deer* is unusual for the period in its treatment of coloured people. While travelling in South Africa, de la Harpe finds them most congenial of all its peoples, as I have mentioned. *God's Step-children* (Millin 1986 (1924)), which I have mentioned already, deals with South Africa's people of mixed race.⁷ Though the narrator comments that "[t]here was something excitingly illicit in the idea of these strange begettings of mixed colours" [1986 (1924):143] Millin herself shows them as unchangeably degraded by their mixed blood. She was a "racialist, obsessed [...] by 'blood' as the most inescapable determinant of moral or any other kind of virtue in an individual, and by the inevitably disastrous consequences of 'mixed' ['white' and 'coloured' or 'black'] blood [...]" (Wade 1974:101). Given that Millin was writing before and during the time of Lewis's writing career, it seems likely that the latter would have been an influence on the ideological position of the former. Lewis, despite being more liberal-minded, admired Millin for the quality of her 'realism' and they engaged on a social and intellectual level (Couzens 1984:ix). However, in imagining a space for the possibility of a transatlantic black identity in 1933, Lewis's work reaches beyond Millin's degraded social Darwinism.

Very telling is Father Macmichael's first encounter with de la Harpe. He had anticipated an altogether different 'form' of the man than that which he encounters:

The priest suddenly loved this young man. Something child-like, innocently humble and eager under all the layers of civilised accomplishment caught at his heart. He wished he had not persuaded him to face such an experiment. The truth was, he had not visualised him aright. He had pictured a brawny, huge negro with all the lion-courage that goes with grand physique, impressive through sheer strength. This man, rather delicate, not tall, had only his art. His fine manners and breeding would not be of much use in softening the hearts of anti-native bucolic politicians. Brute strength might have been more effective. Some thundering, great voice breathing negroid anger, revolt, slaughter... (69)

Lewis can never fully reach beyond her liberal-segregationist beliefs in her presentation of the 'other'. She has been included in this study because she is the only writer who has envisaged the visit of a black American to South Africa in the 1930s, and considered what influence such a visit might have on black people. Since the history of relations between black South Africans and black Americans is my subject, I must claim that a white version of those interactions has validity, if only to make the present-day reader aware of the climate into which the African-American came – or to which he was refused entry. The premise of this project is, as I have explained in the introductory chapter, that a heterogeneous conception of culture, as free as possible from the binaries of racial difference, is the means through which new forms of a transnational understanding of African diasporic history can be constructed. A close reading of a 'black' historical moment could not be arrived at if a scholar were limited by a conception of black identity that now appears inadequate and essentialist in its failure to admit that historical narrative is not formed without intercultural understanding. A biased and inaccurate understanding as, for example, in a history of slavery by one of the white master-class, must invalidate the history that it is capable of constructing.

* * *

In the mid-twenties and early 1930s Lewis made the liberal social and political connections in England that would be vital to the development of her intellectual and literary pursuits. They would include her association with the British trade unionist William Ballinger and his wife Margaret; Mabel Palmer in Durban; and the liberal intellectuals (Mellown 1985:5) Winifred Holtby, the author of the comic *Mandoa, Mandoa!* (1982 (1933)) and the Yorkshire novel *South Riding* (1936); and Vera Brittain, whose autobiographies *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-25* (1994 (1933)) and *Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holtby* (1940) are important as they explore the early twentieth-century British women's experience of life in England during and after the Great War. The war led to "an interruption of the most exasperating kind to [her] personal plans"

[1994 (1933):12], thus explaining the pacifist position Brittain would follow throughout her life. Brittain was deeply influenced by the feminist writings of Olive Schreiner, thus establishing an important South African connection. As she would write: “To Olive Schreiner’s *Woman and Labour* – that ‘Bible of the Woman’s Movement’ which sounded to the world of 1911 as insistent and inspiring as a trumpet-call summoning the faithful to a vital crusade – was due my final acceptance of feminism” [1994 (1933):41]. The fact that it was Schreiner’s feminist writings that so deeply influenced Brittain’s thinking suggests a great deal about the social-intellectual networks that existed between Britain and her colonies. Such liberal-feminist connections also indicate an important transnational, circular negotiation of ideas between the colonial metropole and its antipodean periphery. Holtby was Brittain’s closest friend and both became connected to Lewis through a common commitment to the liberal impulse.

Lewis’s perspective represents the naive position that black Africans have been infected by the decay of colonial modernity and have not been given the time to acculturate. In other words, they should return to the pastoral, outside of the purview of the British Empire (the only justifiable regime in South Africa) or the exploitation of their labour by the Dutch (read Afrikaners). This opinion reflects the experience and writings of Holtby, something that we have considered already.⁸

Wild Deer and *South Riding* were published within three years of each other and share important ideological concerns. Sarah Burton is a spinster in Holtby’s novel and is a modern woman, much in the line of what Woolf has suggested of the liberal and educated, bourgeois female autobiographical presence as character. Lewis’s ‘version’ of British liberalism, as part of “a circle of interested whites” (Duberman 1989:205), was a conservative one. While the rights of the black South Africa subject are, admirably, of concern to the writer (and she effectively sets out the injustices of the mining industry around Goldburg in *Wild Deer*), they are never to be accorded the rights of political enfranchisement and the right to lead themselves – except if this is done in total separation from white ‘civilisation’. Lewis, importantly, introduced Holtby to the “fourth world” of Johannesburg on a major visit to South Africa in 1926, and took her to the Bantu Men’s Social Centre where she would encounter the ‘progressive’ black bourgeoisie. Holtby’s de-

scription of Johannesburg is interesting because it is very similar to Lewis's representation of the city in *Wild Deer*:

There are common lodging houses of indescribable corruption, where men die of phthisis among the drunken brawling of their fellow lodgers. Black prostitutes spread syphilis from small evil hovels in the back yards of those elegant houses where engineers' wives play bridge. Fastidious Johannesburg will not tolerate the contamination of black girls and men sleeping in white houses, so it shifts them off into squalid yards, patched together with paraffin tins, and professes complete ignorance of the nightly occurrences that not unnaturally ensue. [...] The Transvaal has at least one section that sees the iniquity of bringing raw natives into contact with industrial conditions, training them just far enough to become useful minders of machines, and then barring them from every possibility of expansion. [...] Some people say a native rising would be the only thing to shock people awake to the true situation. (Couzens 1987:40-41)

Such a description and such an opinion indicate the influence of Lewis upon Holtby's thinking about race relations in South Africa at the time. They were very aware of the degrading socio-economic conditions that would have generated bitterness and the potential for rebellion among black South Africans. The liberal-segregationist thinking that they espoused saw the onslaught of modernity and industrialization as something that had perverted the steady, gradual course of the black, colonized subject's 'natural' development. The failure of this thinking is that it would be impossible to erase the legacy and effects of the white colonial presence in Africa, because societies are inclined towards change, are dynamic, with individuals and collectives responsive to sociopolitical conditions concomitant with, in the South African instance, a developing sense of their self-worth and right to political enfranchisement and freedom of expression. Such thinking reveals the complexities and variations of position contained in the term 'liberalism', that it need not possess a humanist, democratic outlook, and would be subject to

the social conditions present within a particular society and responsive to a network of intellectual affiliations.⁹

A liberal “conscience” informs Lewis’s writing in *Wild Deer* and also her public presence as a voice fighting for the rights of black South Africans. Dora Taylor observes that Lewis, publishing under her pseudonym, was very much like William Plomer as both look back to the pre-colonial past when black Africans were untouched by European civilisation: “Their physical strength and beauty, their untroubled peace, their innocence, their security within the rigid laws of the tribe are described in such a way as to provide a dramatic contrast to the violation, shame and misery brought about by the first foreign invader” [2002 (1942):54]. Taylor makes some important observations about the naïveté of colonialist representations such as in Lewis’s fiction that exoticise and represent the African subject as the archetypal noble savage with the erotics of phallogocentric colonial desire that I have mentioned. In commenting on the Portuguese colonial exercise in *Four Handsome Negresses*, for example, and that imperial presence’s legacy on the African continent, Lewis’s exoticising and melodramatic impulses limit the ideological and moral impact of what she is trying to express.

Lewis’s is now a defunct colonialist position that has led to her work being taken with little seriousness. Lewis gained international fame through the three-volume *Trader Horn* series, which she edited and co-authored with Augustus Aloysius Horn. He was the “old man with [a] distinctive name” who arrived at her home in Johannesburg in 1925 (Couzens 1984:vi). Horn was an itinerant adventurer who had drifted along the African coast near the end of the nineteenth century and explored its ‘interior’.¹⁰

This fame gave Lewis the leverage to be able to publish *Wild Deer*. It challenged the racist politics of the white regime in South Africa at the time. It was not a financial success and “[t]he fact that it was published in the midst of the Depression probably sealed its fate but its criticism of precisely those groups who would have been its normal readership in South Africa could not have helped” (Couzens 1984:xxviii). Lewis would have considered her writing of *Wild Deer* as important for the concerns and cause of black South Africans. Although the beliefs of apartheid and liberal segregationism may at times seem similar, the latter “must not be equated with the segregationist stance of General Hertzog, Dr Malan, Dr Verwoerd and others” (1984:xvi).

It is important that we locate Lewis as an 'intellectual' as well. This might seem a problematic notion, but the fact that she is a white female voice imagining black diasporic connections in 1933, and *emotional* ones rather than simply those of association, should motivate us to treat her fiction with some seriousness. Lewis is an intellectual as well as a novelist, attempting through her writing at the time to form (and re-form) white perceptions of black African (and African-American) racial difference.¹¹ In the novel, de la Harpe becomes the vehicle through which the black South African subject will discover the tenets of civilised life; not through an immediacy of affect but rather through gradual 'exposure'.¹² Apart from a sustained meditation on the character of de la Harpe, the novel's focus is the failed insurgence of Afrikaner extremists during one of his performances: they are so taken by the intensity of his performance that they are drawn into an unlikely submission.

'Goldburg' was the town in which Lewis lived during much of her life in South Africa and which remained the focus of her sociopolitical concerns, both in the text and in her thinking. She idealises rural life (see Lewis 1926), a concept which is further developed as she speaks of the spatial dynamics of the urban centre and the township in pre-apartheid, colonial South Africa. She is at pains to highlight the force of history and the different degrees in which modernity has impacted on rural and urban life. This is expressed through a continual moralising tone that is exasperating yet also indicates her understanding of the negative effects on black people of colonial modernity. She continues: "Country is separated from country by space, and city from city; but country is separated from city by time. [...] This is exactly true of Johannesburg, where the elemental kraals lie within a few miles. And yet we expect the black man to leap those centuries without self-destruction and with no harm to our social structure" (1926:19).

Lewis's response to the gap between rural and urban living as regards modernity differs from the actual thinking of the black travellers to and from America in the period that are the focus of this study. The worldly intellectual awareness of Jabavu, for example, as well as others of the Lovedale circle, is far from "elemental". Lewis is obviously closed to the possibility of cultural, temporal and intellectual hybridity that the lives and work of such black figures indicate. I am concerned here with liberal segregationism and

the white liberal imagination in South Africa at the time. “Until at least the 1930s many liberal writers felt a benevolent and liberal segregationism was a means of freeing African society from the horrors of a Victorian-style urbanization. [...] [*Wild Deer*] portrayed African characters as essentially lost in the urban metropolis and only finding true peace back in the countryside” (Rich 1993:136).

Throughout her writing, both in fiction and in the essay just mentioned Lewis highlights the negative influence of the colonial presence in Africa. At the same time she opposes any enfranchisement or extension of political authority for black Africans as they exist in her present. They are to be ‘improved’ at least in the novel, by the intervention of African-Americans, because the latter have attained the ‘degree of civilisation’ suitable for self-rule. Lewis saw the black American subject as an important cultural referent, a symbol of ‘light and of civilisation’ and its central propagator for black Africans. Her cultural politics was defined by an understanding of cultural hybridity concomitant with a fear of “the spectre of miscegenation” (Hoernlé 1939:171). As Hoernlé comments further: “Total separation into distinct White and Black ‘areas of liberty’ must be considered as a genuinely liberal idea, if it means the breaking up of the present caste-society which as a whole can never be a free society, or a society of free men [sic], seeing that it makes the liberties necessary for a ‘good life’ the exclusive privilege of the dominant caste” (Hoernlé 1939:173). Lewis shared the liberal segregationist notion with Jan Smuts that black Africans were essentially children, “with a child psychology and outlook” (Smuts 1929:75).¹³

The character of Narida, whom de la Harpe marries and by whom he is to have a child at the end of the novel, seems to be created with this childishness in mind – though Lewis seems to be suggesting that the lack of sophistication of African blacks is not unalterable. However, Lewis, in some form, is able to imagine the possibility of intercultural dialogue with a black subject, though this is never beyond the stage of the imaginative, except in her association with Clements Kadalie (see Figure 15), the leader of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) that by the mid-1920s had become a significant black political force in South Africa. In her novel, *An Artist in the Family*, Sarah Gertrude Millin writes that “not the most liberal woman in South Africa would dare to be seen, alone, in a town, talking to

a dark-skinned person as a matter, not of charity or authority, but of social courtesy" (1928:141). Lewis "set out to protect all that was left of her ideal Africa" (Couzens 1984:22) in her writing of *Wild Deer*. As she wrote of the difficulties in finding a publisher for the book: "I seem to have no reticence left - I am fighting for the only book I shall ever write that gives my emotions about Africa-after 30 years of life in it" (1984:xxiv). The position that she took at the time of the novel's publication by Faber and Faber was a remarkable one for the time. Dora Taylor lucidly suggests that the colonised black subject in Africa can never return to an idyllic pre-modern state because they have already been affected in profound ways by European imperialism and colonial modernity. She feels that black Africans should share in the 'fruits of civilisation', to become integrated into white society.¹⁴

Lewis felt that the way to prevent an extremist, Communist, tendency from stirring black trade unionists to action was to engage with them on a political level. She saw her role as that of a pacifier and was part of a group of white liberals that included Norman Leys and William and Margaret Ballinger, the latter who became a white representative for black South Africans in the British Parliament (Duberman 1989:205). Duberman mentions Ethelreda Lewis here and thus connects her to this circle. This imbues her with a sense of presence for the American reader because she is brought into awareness and away from the obscurity that has plagued her literary and intellectual image.

This liberal group attempted to encourage Paul Robeson to visit South Africa to involve him in the affairs of the ICU. Robeson's wife¹⁵ "did her best to resist" this and prevent her husband from becoming involved (Duberman 1989:205). Couzens has little to say about Paul Robeson's feelings on the matter, and the impression given is that Robeson was prevented from visiting simply because of his race and politics.¹⁶ Lewis captures the fascination felt by white South Africans in *Wild Deer* in her representation of de la Harpe's travels in the country, and this is what gives the African-American subject such a distinct ideological value for the white woman novelist. Because of their hybrid cultural composition, straddling both African and Euro-American cultures in the Atlantic world, they could be perfect vehicles for bringing the liberal message of equality across the racial divide. For Lewis the black American subject would be able to fulfil the promise that Cle-

ments Kadalie, in whom so much faith had been placed, would prove unable to provide. The African-American presence, in line with the liberal tradition of Brittain, Holtby and the Ballingers, would be a salubrious one: black South Africans, seeing how much their brothers and sisters had attained in their proximity to the world of white men, would see the potential within themselves and seek to develop on similar lines, separate from the white populace but with equal access to opportunities, both political, educational and social. In her writing, Lewis is fearful of, and writes against, what some radical black political organisations saw as the need for the black American subject to return to the African 'fatherland' (or what was known as the 'Back to Africa' movement) to reclaim the land for themselves.¹⁷

It is clear that white liberals of the period like Lewis were implicated in the discourses of racial segregation and essential difference that would lead to the development of apartheid. She was complicit in this proto-apartheid discourse despite her liberal tendencies, and wished to reinforce racial difference through British colonial control. The 1920s and 30s were a time of ideological 'flux', when eugenicist thinking was a subject of debate for white liberals in South Africa and throughout the western world.¹⁸ *Wild Deer* was written as an intellectual response to the threat of radical politics, and allowed Lewis to negotiate her place as a white liberal woman in the world (Wade 1974:107). Though the novel may be the product of a particular moment in white South African history, it is fascinating for its depiction by a white woman writer of the interrelations between black diasporic identity and Africans, though with the purpose of maintaining white control of black Africans.¹⁹

The writing of *Wild Deer* was a way through which Lewis could negotiate her political ideas (which, in agreement with Couzens, should not be treated as unsophisticated or lacking in purpose). This is Lewis the novelist as intellectual, made famous by the colonial melodrama (see the *Trader Horn* series particularly) that she is most noted for writing, but committed to the cause of liberalism along segregated lines but with consideration of the rights of 'the native'.²⁰

Wild Deer is bound up in its historical context and cannot be read without reference to the other. As Couzens has noted, more than simply a work of fiction, the novel reveals much about the important set of relation-

ships across continents, and the individuals that were brought together in the common cause of equal rights for black South African workers. Apart from the severe limits, both social and moral, of the liberal segregationist position, *Wild Deer*, in attempting to reach across the borderlines of racial difference, stands as an important reflective document (because of its attempts to reason through fiction the role of the black American subject in Africa) on some of the ideas that were being debated at a challenging point in South Africa's history. The purpose of this historical-intellectual contextualisation at this point in the chapter has been to establish a space in which a reading of the novel can be undertaken that is conscious of the forces that influenced the writer in the shaping of her narrative.

* * *

Throughout his introduction to the text, fifty years after its original appearance, Couzens remains ambivalent and is at pains to distance himself from any definitive claim for the 'real' identity of the protagonist, de la Harpe. As I shall argue at this point in the discussion, there is a complex interplay of fictional and real-life elements in this figure. I suggest that Lewis encodes a more symbolic figure than the actual Robeson, a composite construction of the careers and performances of several African-American male performers. Given Lewis's tendency to allegorise, the implication is that we are observing a partly archetypal figure or, at least an idealised one. The imagining of the character indicates a composite of the various currents within her mind at the time of the novel's writing. *Wild Deer* is an extended prophecy concerning the 'true' path that South African society should take towards the achievement of racial harmony.

In regard to the 'true' identity of her protagonist, Lewis wrote to Winifred Holtby in February 1933 about her protagonist: "Two readers have said there could be no such American negro as de la Harpe. *There is*—and I know him and he is of exactly this quality—and aspirations. I have also, in him, tried to draw the miserable state of an artist too long separated from his base and his inspirations. He is stilted and dull at first—as he would have been. Then his experience of Africa, his ideas all get confused: until he meets the only kind of life in Africa that allows his artist to bloom again"

(Couzens 1984:xxiv). Later, Lewis wrote to Holtby again after she had completed *Wild Deer*:

My readers have said that the negro is an impossible person: but, Winifred, I *know* one just like that, and whose behaviour under those circumstances which he undertook would—I could swear—be of that nature. He had also such (rather unusual and fortunate) experiences in London and in [the] U.S.A. as are spoken of in the book; and had also the idea of the visit to Africa for the purpose of missionising through his art. I will tell his name, should you ask me. What would be the result? I have tried to follow it in *Wild Deer*. He is, naturally, dull and stilted at first, because *out of his element*. Having neither musicians nor fellow negroes about him. And because, *separated from his art and inspiration*, which makes all artists who travel dull. Only wild Africa liberates him: because wild Africa suddenly awakens his musician's inspiration, and from that moment he will live again. Social workers could not liberate him. A savage voice heard in the bush did—a savage wife. (Couzens 1984:xxvi)

This letter sums up the nature of Lewis's wishful thinking. What makes such a delusion interesting is that it represents some form of the imagining of the black experience in the United States to that of South Africa and draws parallels and points of connection across divides of sea and history. The fact that it is the voice of a white woman does little to deny its value and invoking of the politics of diasporic identification that forms the basis of interest for this study. If anything, we are examining a form of the deployment of the *diasporic imaginary*, where notions of race are important but constitute a fragment of the web of discursive positions and engagements that are formative of forms and fictions of transnational history. Lewis and her black subjects are all subjects and objects of empire, and in a new space of certainty and experiment, the white female, colonial subject attempts to transgress the divide of race and cultural difference that is the very limit and liminality included in this chapter's title. There is Lewis's rank colonialist paternalism,

of course, the “black innocents” (141) who must be taught the ways of civilisation by black Americans. There is no dialogism in Lewis’s representations of otherness. However, she dares to take on these voices, to speak for them, as the negrophilist in denial of her repressed inclinations. That, in itself, represents another subject of interest for the postcolonial reader, but I shall not turn to that here given the focus of this study and its purpose of reintroducing texts such as these to current critical debates and concerns.

Of course, the trajectory of *Wild Deer’s* plot is unconvincing given the unreal choices that de la Harpe makes. De la Harpe is a “famous negro singer” (38) and an “intellectual” (23). He realises later on in the novel that, “at the bottom of his two-fold mission to Africa was, in the deep soil of his heart, a third. The quest for Peace had brought him so far” (49). It is “spiritual”, an “adventure of the mind” (11) and a “mission” (12). He comes to Africa for rejuvenation and emotional reconnection with the idea of ‘home’. He has tired of the life of a celebrity in America and Europe and is returning to the home of his ancestors so that he can perform an act of selfless piety, which comes in the form of reproductive sex with a young tribal girl. He regards this woman as nothing more than a vessel for the creation of a new race. Couzens (1984) is uncertain about the identity of the character and, while focusing on Robeson throughout his introduction to *Wild Deer*, refers to Roland Hayes (see Figure 16), another important African-American singer, the first to gain international acclaim, and who was performing in London at the time of Paul Robeson’s zenith. I argue that in the representation of de la Harpe in the novel we are reading a kind of archetypal black male musician figure, a performing subject in the popular consciousness of the white Euro-American world.

This composite subject also includes the presence of James Kwegyir Aggrey, the West African intellectual and missionary who toured the African continent on educational missions in 1921 and 1924. Aggrey was fêted by white colonials because of his advocacy for racial harmony and prolongation of the colonial presence in Africa. He would have been a contemporaneous referent for Lewis and her sociopolitical concerns; both were at the height of their powers at the time. Lewis’s principles suggest a “doctrine of trusteeship” (Kearney 2003:103), as she stressed the notion of the ‘return’ of the black South African subject to a rural life style, removed from the damag-

ing influences of modernity and decay of urban life; she indicates through her writings “a pathological horror of the city” (2003:103). As de la Harpe reflects on Aggrey in the novel:

There was a son of Africa named Agri [sic]. De la Harpe had met him once in New York, heard him speak. That grey, sweat-beaded face, that agonised passion of effort, had set him, too, on the way of sacrifice. A black Son of God, the victim ordained for martyrdom, a saviour of the souls of black men, dying for Africa...Africa, who had borne him of a savage mother and a chieftain father under the palm trees of the western coast. De la Harpe could not think of his early death, far from the land he fought for, without a rush of tears. Every step he had himself taken seemed to him to be an inevitable process in his determination not to let such an African as Agri be forgotten by the sons of Africa. Such lives as his must not be poured out in vain on the unheeding earth. To allow that is to admit the powers of evil, to shout aloud “There is no God!” (103-104)

Here lies the contradiction in her thought as I have stated several times before: while she views the state of the black labourer as one of unjust suffering, and knows that he needs to gain the ‘light of civilisation’, she rejects the Marxist principles that form the basis of this materialist conception of society. She shares with her contemporaries apprehensions concerning black rebellion, which at this time seemed a real possibility, both in form and political attitude, and later in the chapter I consider the representation of de la Harpe in relation to these concerns, and his reactions in performance and its description by the narrative voice in *Wild Deer* provide complex sites for interrogation and analysis.

The importance *Wild Deer* lies in its speaking to and *enacting* the presence of a transnational diasporic black figure within the context of South African, albeit a white imaginary. Here lies the ambiguity behind Lewis’s purpose and project in the novel. She at once speaks for the enfranchisement of African subjects while they also remain largely silent and stupefied

by the limits of their own lack of civilisation and ‘perversion’ by the colonial presence. Nevertheless, it may be that Robeson’s most damaging public stance was his preoccupation and commitment to Communist Russia.²¹

But there were other less controversial figures that would have been current in Lewis’s mind, though not possessing the reach of Robeson’s celebrity appeal. Roland Hayes, for instance, is one part of the amalgam and formation of that symbolic figure, ideal in the version that Lewis imagines. There is something interesting about the way in which one writer describes Hayes that seems similar in description to de la Harpe: “He chose to overcome racism by example and in doing so became a trailblazer. When he sang, art became more than polished excellence. It appealed to something universal, something beyond the emotions, and something beyond the intellect, something one could call the soul” (Carter 1977:187). He had great respect for Booker T Washington’s reconciliatory position in relation to Southern whites, and was very conscious of his identity despite the criticism railed against him by African-American rights groups who derided him for his apparent lack of political commitment. As he once said: “I had set out to become an artist, but I still had to learn that I must approach art personally; I had still to be taught that I, Roland Hayes, a Negro, had first to measure my racial inheritance and then put it to use” (Woolsey 1974:184). This is a stance similar in some ways to Robeson’s but very different because of Robeson’s vocal involvement in the anti-colonial movement.

For Lewis, Hayes may have possessed the right moral and political presence, while Robeson and Lewis’s imagining of herself as Ruth Grainger provides the unstated and unconscious means through which she could express her curiosity of and desire for the Other. She could not speak of, let alone imagine, such a relationship at that deeply conservative point in South Africa’s colonial history. I would not say that Roland Hayes lacked Paul Robeson’s dynamism and presence, but rather his fame. A fan of de la Harpe in the novel exclaims on the prospect of him undertaking a private performance for Ruth Grainger’s musical society: “Oh, Lord, yes! Bring him along! I’d listen to a murderer in our midst if he had a voice like de la Harpe. I’ve got every record he ever made. Give offence? Politics? Damn the whole lot! We’re a musical society and I want music! I don’t care where from. Hell’s good enough for me” (100-101). By the time of Lewis’s writing of *Wild Deer*,

Robeson would have been better known and would have sold more records than Hayes, which gives substance to my claim that the character of de la Harpe is made up of Hayes's moral commitment, lacking in overt political intent, and Robeson's more widely-known voice and fame.

On one occasion when performing before a white audience, Hayes "[was forced, because of prejudice, to sing from behind a curtain. His wonderful spiritual talent, and time, have removed that curtain, and Mr. Hayes is now gladly received by audiences everywhere" (Smith 1935:431). Smith writes in her essay, "Negro Musicians and Their Music", of the "unusual contribution" (1935:428) that African-American performance culture had made to the quality of American music generally. She mentions "Roland Hayes, the great tenor of our time" (1935:430). She highlights the distinct social context within which this music and its songs are produced, and how the slave's experience of suffering was translated into the emotive sound of Negro spirituals and black American singing for enfranchisement and liberation. As she continues, "We grant that music enabled our forefathers to withstand physical slavery. Do we, as their descendants, need its power and beauty? [...] Will not the demonstration of these achievements convince others that we are entitled to more than we receive?" (1935:430). For Lewis, it is in this "demonstration" of the African-American subject's attainment of civilization through performance that is to be found their importance as a cultural and social referent for black Africans.

Lewis would have been moved by this performance of memory and legacy of torment, and this was richly conveyed through the deep voice of Paul Robeson. Lewis became interested in Robeson around 1929 when she and her husband visited London from April to August and would likely have been "aware of [his] very first and highly successful appearance at the Albert Hall on 28 April" and could also have encountered the singer of one of his provincial tours (Couzens 1984:vi). In 1930 Lewis would write a review of Robeson's iconic performance of *Othello* (see Figure 13), despite the fact that she had already returned to South Africa (1984:vi). Another commentator, writing of the "Negro spiritual," explores the "critical turns in [Harlem] Renaissance debates about the folk music inheritance, black nationalism and the cosmopolitanism of the New Negro" through "intellectual portraits" (Anderson 2001:3). The borderlines of difference between black folk music

styles and that of European classical music are also evident among black concert stage performers. Hayes, who “followed the contours of Du Boisian cosmopolitanism quite closely,” sang spirituals and European classical music (2001:62), as did Robeson.²²

It is probable that Lewis would have seen Hayes or Robeson perform in London. One description of a concert by Hayes on 21 April 1921 indicates something of the emotional effect that such a recital may have had on Lewis: “His voice is most pleasant, and he uses it well, with perhaps the least tightening of the throat in the louder phrases. He has a well-sustained legato, and this is assisted by his way of singing on the m’s and n’s. He also sings throughout in perfect tune, thereby putting himself in a small class” (Green 1982:32). A white South African businessman attended one of Hayes’s performances (1982:39), and while the singer’s engagement with other African peoples “remains speculation” (1982:41), he was singing the diaspora in many ways, and at a very early stage in its development. It is useful to contextualise some of the social and performative conditions of the time that would have influenced Lewis’s representation of de la Harpe and in the act of fiction writing. She provides a space for the black American subject in the South African imaginary, though written from a compromised white liberal position.

* * *

The epigraph to *Wild Deer* is from William Blake’s “Auguries of Innocence”: “The wild deer, wandering here and there/Keeps the human heart from care” (ll. 21-22). Lewis substitutes the word “soul” in the original for “heart” in her epigraph, which might suggest a deliberate error on her part, as well as her intentions in writing the novel. The “wild deer” is the text’s protagonist, the travelling African-American musician, de la Harpe, who visits South Africa at a spiritual low-point in his life and finds renewal amongst its black people.

Blake’s poem is composed of a string of comparisons between the way in which a community treats its animals and its general moral state – the animals, in fact, represent innocence and their treatment is compared with the treatment which black people receive at the hands of the powerful whites

who control their lives. The novel's original name was to be *Waterboy*, the name of one of Paul Robeson's best known songs, another of which was entitled "Steal Away" which de la Harpe sings in *Goldburg* (Couzens 1984:vi). The lyrics of the song follow and are included in a letter that a certain B Baumgarten wrote to Lewis on 18 January 1933 (1984:xxviii):

Waterboy, where are you hiding?
If you doan come I'm gonna tell your daddy.
There ain't no hammer that's on this mountain
That rings like mine, boys, that rings like mine.
I done bust this rock, boys, from here to Macon,
All the way to the gaol, boys, yes, back to the gaol.
You jack of diamonds, now, you jack of diamonds,
Well, I know you of old boys, yes, I know you of old.
You rob my pocket, yes, you rob my pocket.
You done rob my pocket, of the silver and gold.
Waterboy, where are you hiding?
If you doan come, I'm goin' to tell your daddy.
Waterboy.

For Couzens, the reference to mining in the Negro spiritual connects it with the South African condition; "[Lewis] no doubt chose [the] title because she saw Robeson as the potential bringer of relief, the water-bearer, the saviour of the blacks of South Africa, imprisoned, robbed of their 'silver and gold'" (1984:vi). There are also parallels of image in the novel and the song, between the sea and anvil of the former, and the water and hammer of the latter, which suggest much about her affection for the parable and for heavy moralising (1984:vi). This gives to Lewis's African-American musician (who Couzens assumes is Robeson but acknowledges the possibility that Roland Hayes is also a referent) the messianic role of a reconciler of the races and righter-of-wrongs. What is interesting is Lewis's mediation between the cultural contexts of black American music and the conditions in South Africa. It would however be assuming too much to draw the conclusion that the allusion to Robeson's song suggests that de la Harpe is to be identified as the former.

Father Macmichael, the priest who meets de la Harpe on his arrival at the Cape Town docks, says that he is “banking a tremendous lot” on de la Harpe’s “mission” to South Africa (45). The African-American performer is the “first missionary of the kind” and the “first negro delegate to the white South African” (45). As Macmichael explains further:

“[...] [W]e’ve had American negroes here before—jazz specialists in the music-halls, a few Garveyites, a preacher or two. But we’ve never had a famous singer or any other kind of artist. Of course, we spread your more cultured papers as much as we can amongst our educated natives, but they are pitifully beyond their reach...So I thought—if we could get someone in the flesh every now and again it would do more good than reams of printing. But you are unfortunate in being the first—” (45)

Macmichael’s ideas are a reflection of Lewis’s as the white voice speaks and superiority of distance and acquisition of civilisation are conveyed to de la Harpe, suggesting how he should expect little more from black Africans than indifference to his presence or a marvelling at his superior status and demeanour. For Lewis, de la Harpe’s other purpose is to signify to white South Africans the measure of the black American’s attainment of civilised behaviour and practices. This is an important gesture but the novel’s failed project is that it never allows the black African subject to speak, to negotiate the space of sameness and difference that defines their relationship with African-Americans. She is also very clear about de la Harpe’s urbane musical tastes, removed from contemporary popular forms such as jazz and the blues. They possess a jingoistic quality for the singer. This set of conservative tastes is indicated just after he has arrived in Cape Town:

De la Harpe was left waiting. He stood in a store full of pianos. Music filled the shelves, and great piles of gaudy dance albums were stacked on the counters. Upstairs a blare of records and gramophones being sold. The preponderating noise was of American blues, of men’s voices of an unnatu-

ral sweet effeminacy, tender-sweet in their sexless softness...
[...] Upstairs a new record blared its appalling assemblage of
civilised noises. Three months earlier it had vomited its un-
happy laughter from every window and doorway in Harlem.
Civilised laughter... (47-49)

Tellingly, Lewis does not see any value in the popular forms of music created by African-Americans, according to her own perception of the history and development of them. She prefers when the black performing subject simply re-enacts the canon of classical European music and the negro spirituals that evoke forms of suffering and mirror/set out the history of torment which she feels defines what is admirable about American negroes. Buis (1996) writes of the “civilised-uncivilised matrix” that defines black South African twentieth-century music history. In other words, the claim that indigenous forms and those appropriated from African-American culture possessed little or no value, reflecting the uncivilised tendencies of the colonised African subject, while Euro-American forms took on the hegemonic function of a ‘high’ cultural referent, to be valorised as the mark of civilisation. Lewis obviously supported this position in the representation of de la Harpe, another mark of the serious limits of *Wild Deer* and its failure to negotiate cultural difference. “This highly condescending, flawed notion of jazz history, reflects an attitude as patronizing as post-Victorian colonialists in Britain and South Africa. The arrival of records marketed in Britain show remarkably similar sentiments between Americans (mostly New Yorkers) and the British of the 1920s” (1996:3).

This opinion is extended further in the form of the character of Paul Peregrine, the “tired American” (102) and “Harlem adventurer” (128). He is the other significant black American presence in Lewis’s novel. He looks “like a picture on an American jazz album” (131); this “sophisticated negro soul” (132). De la Harpe is “chilled” (102) by him. Peregrine, the “showman” (129), functions as de la Harpe’s exact opposite in the narrative. What is most unbelievable is his clown-like stature and role as an entertainer for the white mine magnates and their wives who visit the dance hall. Lewis shows her age and lack of familiarity with contemporary life at this point. The world of jazz is beyond her experience. It signifies moral decay and the deca-

dence of modernity. Peregrine, whose name means 'wanderer' or a bird of prey, is nothing but an entertainer and possesses no substance. His existence is purposeless and for Lewis represents the worst of any black Americans that were visiting South Africa at the time. He lacks moral commitment, does not meditate extensively on the meaning of his presence in Africa as de la Harpe does, and is more concerned with entertaining the natives and the white visitors who need to be watched over attentively because he his role as coordinator of the township dance hall, which he "runs with energy, joviality and wisdom. [...] Respectability was his watchword. He knew his living depended upon Respectability" (128).

Peregrine's "simple ambition was to make money that would take him as quickly as possible back to Harlem and civilisation. Bleed the savages and do it well and hearty, and clear out while you could. Still, a very useful fellow to the Mission" (102). His presence in the country seems morally reprehensible in contrast to de la Harpe's as he is chiefly concerned with profit and his collusion with the American mission indicates Lewis disapproval of his role in South Africa. The American missionary presence in the country played an important role in resistance to the pre- and apartheid system, though indirectly. Historically, they gave black South Africans a sense of worth and made them aware of their rights through education in the country and in the United States [see Gish (2000) for example]. Lewis, as we have noted, is suspicious of educated blacks and cannot reconcile her white superior status with the fact that they are as able and do not need to be eased into the world of western civilisation.

The dance hall that Peregrine, the "big, clever negro" (129) directs, is nothing but an "outlet" (102) for the black population that is "well under the secretary's [of the American mission] thumb" (102). The missionaries possess a "fatherly eye" (131). The suggestion is that Lewis finds entertainment of any kind for black South Africans to be frivolous, immoral. De la Harpe meets Peregrine for the first time at a dance hall which takes place in the second part of the novel, headed "Slimes." From this point the narrative immerses itself in the filth and moral decay of Johannesburg, emphasising Lewis's distaste for urban modernity and desire for the black subject to return to the innocence of the countryside. While we have suggested something of the condescending nature of this idea, *Wild Deer* is also of value as a histori-

cal document because it reveals much about the degradation of urban life through the repressive social engineering of the white regime and the harsh living conditions that black South Africans were subject to. The ‘frivolity’ of the dance hall would have functioned as a form of escape for the black population with the mines the prime source of their misery. Its purpose, as described by a white character in the novel, is to “keep the native amused—as much as possible in decent surroundings” (131). Peregrine is responsible, as I have noted, for ensuring that the white frequenters of the dance hall are sufficiently entertained, kept at a safe distance from the rowdy conduct of the ‘natives’ and amused accordingly. At certain moments in the thick of the evening’s amusement, he is able to forget the formality of tone and subservience to whites because of the superficial, ephemeral immediacy of the dance hall experience. This playfulness is central to Peregrine’s character:

Paul—clever Paul—knew well that this tone was reserved for public occasions only. He played up to it with genius. With heart and soul, and big body resplendent in evening dress and diamond studs, he played up to every occasion. Who would believe he was the same meek soul who in unglamorous hours in his office or at a committee meeting replied: “No, sir. Certainly not, sir”, to tired peevish men who said: “And by the way, Peregrine, I don’t want you to... (132)

While staying at the American Native Club, which is under the control of the local American mission station in the black settlement and which he has been introduced to by Father Macmichael, de la Harpe reflects on the American presence in Johannesburg and anticipates his first meeting of Peregrine: “As if Africa were not killing him with black men, without Americans adding to his troubles. Also he had a natural distrust of the American negro on the prowl in Africa. What with evangelists who were amateur Garveys...” (102). At this moment, and in the very nature of his thinking, De la Harpe is almost ‘white’ but not quite ‘black’ because he is Lewis’s ideal African-American subject, urbane, distant from the realities of African life, and an imaginary object for the channelling of her desires – repressed and unwritten. By imagining the space of the dance hall, Lewis attempts to set out the

meaning of a location that she cannot fully enter or participate in because of her age and race. She, like her protagonist with his outsider status, finds solace in her thoughts and rejects the contemporary and indigenous forms of African and black American forms of popular music that were beginning to coalesce into dynamic new forms that would express the mood of a pre-war period unfamiliar yet with the horrors of a second global conflict. The age of swing, jazz and the blues, would have been anathema to Lewis's conservative tastes.

Peregrine's dance hall is an implausible space, not least because of the Lewis's narrator's bizarre descriptions of it and the white people, American and South African, who visit it frequently to 'inspect the natives'. The black subjects are less than human, as we observe throughout the narrative, and are described from a cold, clinical, almost anthropological distance by the narrator: "In the ring the performing creatures circled smoothly by with serious faces—black men and women dancing..." (129). When de la Harpe visits the dance hall on another occasion with a white student from the Native Studies department of the local university, the absurdity of the representation is most evident:

Some respectable young natives in blue serge, or purple cloth, were solemnly, hands outstretched, turning round to the music with a constant changing of odd little steps. Some of them unsmilingly held a male partner as if he were a girl. Others, even more severely masculine, twirled round in solitary ecstasy. Their eyes stared at unseen horizons. Rhythm possessed them. True, such strange rhythms as these did not goad sweating bodies into the high leap and to sudden shout; but there was a dreamy content in it which cradled the body and taught it new, rocking, sliding movements.

Neither men nor girls talked as they danced. There were no smiling faces. This music of the new negroid world possessed them. The monotonous soft undertone of drum-tapping, which was a specialty in Paul's band, held them together as beads are held on a string. They looked as if they were listening for a voice which now and then might pierce

the foreign sounds with startling familiarity, as a man may hear the shriek of a monkey overhead. The soft drum-taps kept them expectant...

In all this town of feverish nostalgia here was a sound which spoke to the heart. The nostalgic murmur of the drums spoke the language of every tribe.

De la Harpe was queerly moved. Those solemn faces, staring eyes, unseeing eyes that saw scenes not of Goldberg...

The crude music reached him, too. There were instruments in Paul's band which he had been clever enough to borrow from the kraal. The primitive vague twanging of the jew's-harp, the joyfully familiar mouth-organ, instruments beloved of little goat-herds, unexpectedly strayed into the pattern of the music; even, sometimes, the urgent hammering of that wildest of zithers, the kafir-piano—the stringed gourd hit with padded drum-sticks, whose unbridled throbbing discords and panic hurry, like the drumming of anvils by a mad smith-god under the full Spring moon, intoxicates an African body. Paul did not allow the kafir-piano to take charge until the visitors had gone. He could never tell to what extent he could control his clients. Sometimes late on a Saturday night for a few frenzied minutes of grand finale, the key turned in the door... (136-137)

There is something interesting about this moment of description. The narrative voice seems to lose itself in the ritual of the dance. However, the participating subjects are constructed as animal-like, lost in the abandon and savagery of the moment. Their "ecstasy" is not an indication of enjoyment, for they are a mindless throng bound to the jingoism of a savage sound. This "music of the new negroid world" lacks depth or complexity. It reduces the individual to an imbecilic state. This indicates another point at which Lewis's narrative recedes into the exoticising tendencies of other colonialist fictions. The voiceless throng of black Africans stands starkly against the more human African-American characters. Their only purpose is to follow

the lead of their diasporic counterparts, whose music mirrors the ignominy of their own cultural forms. What is curious is the idea that Paul's "African Band should lead Harlem" (137) which indicates Lewis's awareness of the transatlantic trade in music, and the emergence of hybrid forms that reflect a world where culture travels. At this point we reach another state of liminality, for while there is the admittance that two alternate cultural forms might coalesce into a new dynamic form of diasporic performance, whatever is achieved is monotonous, monologic, and devoid of substance. The very fact that Lewis bothers to represent this interplay of performative forms is of interest to the reader, yet the limits of her imagination can never engage the sounds being described on any substantive level.

Paul Peregrine must maintain order among the frivolities of the Johannesburg nightlife. "Part of [his] performance [for the white visitors] was for Paul to conduct the party through the crowd on to the platform. There they were given sweet cakes and pink, soft drinks, while Paul hovered about talking wise talk to me men and casting an admiring glance or two at the women" (131). Peregrine's gaze at the women is almost salacious as his predatory stature is emphasised. In addition, the black women "enjoyed saying Mister to a black man" (131) and Peregrine perceives them as "coloured women" (131). This is odd, because Lewis confuses her categories in the description. The instability of her position as narrating subject is emphasised, while her liminality and comprehension of the cultural conditions that she is describing, are indicated in this instance of racial identification confusion. It is interesting, though, that Peregrine imports his own racial descriptors onto the South African context, seeming to be ignorant about the context within which he finds himself in South Africa. Lewis's narrator has mentioned a coloured woman before, the one with whom de la Harpe identifies earlier on in the narrative.

Reflecting on his experiences in South Africa, Peregrine writes a letter to a friend in New York:

"[...]No bully profits for me. Like in the States, it's all in the pockets of a few bosses here and in England. The way I've gotta watch my steps is a long story. Believe me it's not honey like running a dance hall in Harlem where there's only the

revellers [sic] to watch out for or a knife comes out now and then. Here there's no prohibition except for the negro. Natives we call them here. [...]" (133)

He also notes the dangers of running a dance hall in Johannesburg:

"Little old Harlem's a Baptist choir chicken-supper compared with what I've seen here. And these big buck savages are not too fond of me, not when they're full of native beer or been smoking dagga, a sort of hemp-seed dope. I'm safe here on the edges of the respectable quarter, arm-hooked to the missionaries and the mine barons. (135)

Peregrine is de la Harpe's opposite; and the kind of character that Lewis establishes as a contrast to the more noble concerns of the latter. The frontispiece to the novel states "the characters are fictitious". But the historical value of the text must also be highlighted, because of the kinds of characters that bear direct reference to figures contemporary to the time of Lewis's writing. Through the character of Peregrine, Lewis sets out her understanding of African-American performance styles and the nature of Johannesburg nightlife. She sees only the decay of modernity and the superficiality of the metropole. Of course the voice of Peregrine is entirely unbelievable, with his reference to black South Africans as "big buck savages" and his propensity to find affinity with the white people. He is similar to them, of course, given the level of his acculturation to western civilisation through his American cultural background, and in his words a distance is established from black Africans for they are seen as degenerate. It is only de la Harpe who is able to transgress this boundary through his later return to the rural periphery of the land of the Macas tribe. His journey out signifies the symbolic return to an ideational, essentialised version of black African identity, as I have already suggested. Peregrine can never make this journey and his function in the narrative is an important one, to demonstrate how Lewis valorises more traditional, westernised forms of music and performance within de la Harpe's repertoire, but sees a need for him to depart from the centres and certainties of white, Anglo-American, colonial culture.

* * *

Wild Deer begins with de la Harpe onboard a ship and bound for Cape Town having departed from England, and begun from New York. Throughout this journey he is subject to the curiosity of the white passengers. He is “sick of [their] kindness” (11), which indicates that they have been reacting condescendingly (if even unintentionally because of their own awkwardness) toward the African-American singer. They attempt, through their “intellectual” (11) actions, to downplay the reality of the unstated (and denied) racial prejudice that surrounds their perceptions of black people. One passenger, speaking to another, suggests that they should not forget that de la Harpe is “human” (11). After “[a] week’s contact with English and Dutch²³ South Africans” (12), a ‘civilised’ black like de la Harpe does not fit comfortably in this space. In his journey to Africa, de la Harpe is concerned chiefly with a “spiritual experience” (11) and ignores the attentions of the white women onboard. In line with Lewis’s theme of a pious pilgrimage to the origins of his heritage, a “quest” (15), the black male subject is celibate, positioned safely outside the ambit of white female sexual desire, chaste, and engaged purely in an “adventure of the mind” (11).

While de la Harpe is alone and self-reflective in the first chapter of the novel, the second initiates the association between himself and Grainger. In her he finds someone who obviously empathises with his position and is committed to the cause of social justice for black people. Of course, her liberal-mindedness is limited by her desire to preserve colonial hegemony on the African continent, but very unusual for her time, and as much an ‘outsider’ as de la Harpe in the terms of the other white passengers, she is willing to engage the performer. This is an important moment and introduces the focus of the analysis in this chapter. This is the beginning of Lewis’s imaginary staging of the interaction of two different minds (and races of course), though the engagement is always problematic because it is imagined by a white female writer and can never fully appreciate the perspective of the Other. De la Harpe finds Grainger “a nice girl” (21) and first encounters her when she comes to his defence after a racist verbal attack against him and the fear of a white woman for the safety of the young white girls onboard.

He declines to sing for the white passengers and is regarded as “disobliging” (21). His reservations are understandable given his treatment as an object of curiosity by the rest of the passengers and Grainger finds the initial contact with him difficult. She is angered by his refusal.

One of the narrative’s most revealing moments in the interaction between the two takes place at this point:

De la Harpe was silent. The angry girl...

Suddenly he said briskly, “Shall we walk?”

“That’s kind of you. I suppose you want to put me at my ease. I should never venture to suggest such a thing myself.”

“Am I so unapproachable? Miss Grainger, neither you nor I have erected this barrier between us.”

“That is true. But I am not the one that should knock it down. You might say I was a philanthropist, or a sentimentalist, or a socialist, or an English-bred girl who doesn’t know colonial etiquette.”

“You are a penetrating young woman, I’m afraid. In the meantime—we walk? While incidentally, your reputation is blasted with every step you take. What you really are is a negrophilist.” (23)

There conversation ends abruptly here and they say their goodnights. This first exchange is symbolic because it defines their relationship and the “barrier” of which de la Harpe speaks is the very cultural and racial divide that leads the novel to failure in its attempts to negotiate an intercultural dialogue of understanding. This moment is profoundly autobiographical because Lewis was born in England, came to South Africa with metropolitan sensibility and could not deal with the colonial lag, the way in which the provinces of the empire do not progress and develop at the same pace as the mother country. There is always devolution within the colonial space. Lewis would have had to adapt to the more conservative racial attitudes in South Africa, as would have Grainger, her fictional self. De la Harpe speaks of her “reputation” which alludes to the kinds of disapproval that Lewis may have

faced in her own association with Clements Kadalie. Lewis's "negrophilist" project failed and was reduced to something of little consequence in South African history. Unlike Grainger, she was able to rely on her fame gained from the *Trader Horn* books and film to be able to legitimise her project. De la Harpe thinks that Grainger might see her actions onboard as a "competent handling of a difficult situation" (23) and senses that she feels intellectually superior to the other passengers because of her more developed liberal sensibilities.

In his self-reflections, de la Harpe suitably (according to the intentions of Lewis) admires the European colonial exercise, and an instance of this takes place when he observes the Portuguese captain of the ship on which he is travelling. He respects the captain's drive, the "human passion" and the colonial impulse's desire for "new scenes": "Drove [the ship] further again, round the huge bulk of Africa to the east, as it drove the Spaniard west to the Americas. I caught for a moment some conception of the passion and the strength, the prolonged fidelity, which are wrought into the steel spring of all such probings into the unknown and the possible" (15). The imagery is phallogocentric which is unsurprising given its valorising of the imperial exercise and the stretch of the European imagination. It is rather unbelievable that an Africa-American man, aware of the legacy of suffering that the Euro-American slave trade wrought, would be so admiring of the colonial impulse. Yet, his return to Africa must be negotiated through much the same process of 'entry' into 'the unknown'. In other words, he returns by the very means that were instrumental in the subjugation of his ancestors. This is the product of history and later I shall turn to another instance of de la Harpe's remembering in the next, when the external stimuli of the South African environment compel him to engage in a flight of memory.

I have already considered Lewis's negotiation and exploration of African-American performance and musical forms, the liminality of, and problems with, her representation of the interaction between othered subjects (read a failure of intercultural engagement), because of the social, political and intellectual context in which she was writing. As I have argued, within this space of conversation between the two, we may also observe the latent autobiographical energies that drive the narrative, and the repressed expressions of desire by the white female subject for the black male subject

indicated in the novelist's description of the sexual act at the conclusion of *Wild Deer*; the descriptive energies that form Lewis's engagement with the black male body. This is the only way through which Lewis could have negotiated her feelings at the time. My suggesting any locus of desire could be contested because of the forms of race essentialising that we find in her first novel, *The Harp*. I would propose that we see *Wild Deer* as a progression from Lewis's former opinion of race, through her interactions with liberal women such as Mabel Palmer and Winifred Holtby, the latter of whom was instrumental in her developing perceptions of the black African and black American Other.

Lewis's narrating voice in the text makes an important observation regarding the condescending superficiality of the 'kindness' and the quaintness with which the black American-American musician is treated. This is a point at which the liminality of the intercultural situation is evident and as readers we wait expectantly, seeking out the possibility of a transgressing of the boundaries of otherness. This is, of course, similar to the "emotional aspects of the colour situation" (Cornwell 2003) that William Plomer explores in his novelistic representation of interracial associations. But in addition to this, Lewis gives the black American subject a chance to *speak*, and we see this through de la Harpe's descriptions of experience of the white other. We also observe something of the strangeness and fraught politics of identity that defines the relationship of African diasporic subjects with between 'home' and the 'homelessness' of otherness.

One particularly racist passenger during de la Harpe's journey, a Mrs Hoffmann, suggests to Grainger that black men are nothing but servants and never fulfil any role of more importance in society. As the liberal-minded voice of conscience, Grainger defensively suggests: "They are men first. Men. You've broken down their pride and their reserved tribal habits. And you expect them to be as unimpressionable as if they were eunuchs in a harem" (20). Hoffmann's response is typical for the time: "Oh well-if you *like* the blacks...I wonder you don't ask to sit next to your nigger friend at table. Nobody's likely to steal him from you" (20). Grainger's opinion might reflect Lewis's conservative opinion about the influence of colonial modernity on black people (see Kearney 2003), but in her words she emphasises the humanness of black "Men", that they deserve equal rights, the

treatment that every white person receives, though there is a confusion indicated between de la Harpe as the acculturated African-American, and the black African subjects that form the root of Mrs Hoffmann's fears. I would assume because of her colonial status that she has not encountered many black Americans before. This is because she reduces all black people to a single definition of savagery, and Grainger sets out to establish the sameness of de la Harpe in the face of the otherness that Hoffmann is so vocal about. There is much that is amusing in the notion of "reserved tribal habits", yet in them Grainger suggests a comparison to the 'civilised' behaviour of colonial culture. She is constantly aware of the negative effects of the colonial exercise on the black subject in Africa, but is naive enough to be unaware that those very black subjects would have been actively engaged in the appropriation of that culture and syncretising it to suit their needs in the face of an encroaching modernity.

The African-American musician is drawn to his cabin, to the privacy and solace of the act of writing. Perhaps this consolation of the act of creation bound by the safety of the removal from the public realm of human experience is the very location in which we are able to sense the means through Lewis imagines and writes her ideas and existence. This sheltered place is the space in which the author may explore her fancies and ideals without the effects of public response, and de la Harpe, like her, intends to "capture the elusive moment" (12) of introspection. This is the point at which words, which arrive through the flow of consciousness and privation, enter the world and must be grasped by the initiating, authorial voice. This moment provides an interesting metafictional comment on the nature of the writing process. The autobiographical energies present here are implicit in the imagining of the character of de la Harpe through the representation of his intentions and self-removal from the colonial gaze.

There is immediacy in this act of writing, of the need to seize words before they escape into the firmament of forgetfulness, "thoughts [that] pored incoherently from the brain" (12). On first reading the novel seems disorientated at this point and lacking in focus. The reader needs to consciously engage in a form of self-location in relation to the discourses of self-representation and otherness that are being set out. This instability, or uncertainty, is evidence of the indulgences and aesthetic flaws of *Wild Deer*.

The novel relies heavily on the assumptions of liberal segregationism and white liberal location of the reader, while without a keen awareness of the historical context within which Lewis writes, we would be uncertain about the identity of the subjects being represented or the intentions (and reasons for the failure) of the author.

Throughout the voyage Grainger chooses to 'educate' de la Harpe about the nature and history of South African society, while also setting out her opinion of the nature of the race relations and the status of the black subject in Africa. Two aspects of her perspective indicate the possibilities and limits of her views on colonial and colonised societies. Firstly, and with a just and valued purpose she derides the unequal economic relations and conditions for black people in South Africa with its "laws reverting to slavery in all but name" (72). She says that "there'll always be a few, even in South Africa, on the side of the negro. Always somebody trying to put things right. Playing at Sisyphus and killing themselves in the process" (27). Here we see one of the possibilities of Lewis's imagination to transgress the boundaries of difference. While acknowledging that colonial society leaves little chance for the black African subject to 'progress', Grainger reveals her condescending, colonialist perspective, and the singular failure of the imagination in the narrative:

"Mr. de la Harpe, you may think that the work of all who love your race-and there are many-is to bring that-capacity [for the black subject to dream, to engage in cultural and intellectual pursuits]-back again. When you've lived a little time in Africa you will realise that-it can never come back because it has never been. A chance black man whose name rings through history, the glamour that suffuses the race through a fictitious Othello-they came from the fringes of Africa, in touch with white civilisation, as you have been. But the dark, central masses are still-asleep. Have been asleep for centuries. But I mustn't put too many impressions into your head. It's best for you to go with an open mind." (26)

There is nothing surprising about this opinion because it is typical of impe-

rialist thought, where colonial culture is a benevolent force and only those black subjects who have encountered it, who exist at the edge of its purview, have achieved any form of notoriety or civility. It is the missionaries, for instance, who act as the “channel” that ensures the “smooth” running of the black subject’s acculturation into civilisation (33). The historical example is Othello, and this resonates with Paul Robeson’s famous performance of the character and Grainger’s attempt to explain the presence of a black subject within the canon of English literature. The Moor mirrors the character of de la Harpe. He has a white lover of course who in the tragic mode he murders in a jealous rage. This seems an intentional (or unconscious) allusion for Lewis that indicates the failure of interracial relationships and the illicit passions that any form of desire inculcates. It would be tempting to psychoanalyse such a moment in the narrative, to explore the repressed desires of the novelist or her fictionalised autobiographical self, but it is enough to observe the likely reference by the narrating voice in *Wild Deer* to a fictional character that “suffuses the race” with an only marginal pride. Grainger leaves de la Harpe to form his own interpretation of the continent through his ensuing experience of South Africa, but that is of course to be a limited one because he does not venture beyond the southern region of the continent.

As with the other texts considered in this study, de la Harpe’s transatlantic journey is represented as an emotional one and takes on the narrative function of archetype. It is symbolic in its function in Lewis’s narrative. The spirit and memory of history is inscribed in the journey: for Eslanda Robeson it is the retracing of the Middle Passage to an imaginary home (and for de la Harpe of course); for Davidson Jabavu it is the intent to discover his ‘civilised’ self; and for Ethelreda Lewis, it is the white writer’s attempt to trace the same journey and emotive memories from the outsider perspective – reachable only through the imagination, so that she might appreciate and represent her ideal version of the African-American subject’s experience of Africa. This experience will be inflected in the narrative by a profound martyrdom, as de la Harpe must suffer for his art, reject the canon of western music and its performance that has defined his career, and return ‘home’ to the savage wilds of the interior.

I call this ‘martyrdom’ because he must leave behind the culturally familiar, that which has defined his identity. A return to his heritage, an

African 'culture' which is defined, or the 'interior' of the continent would be a tragic choice. It contributes to the unbelievable nature of the narrative, because the African-American subject can never fully return to the culture of origin that the violence of the transatlantic slave trade has destroyed. De la Harpe is so very different from black Africans culturally because of his acculturation of a western identity, and shares only the bonds of race with the Macas people who he seeks to find an affinity with in southern Africa. (There is the problem, of course, of African-American origins in west Africa in terms of Lewis's contradictory representation of de la Harpe finding solace with this southern African tribe.) Symbolically for Lewis, de la Harpe must enter the interior, moving towards a feminised centre, which for us is an imperialist/masculinist act that does not seem characteristic of the prodigal son returning home. This is also a symptom of Lewis's colonialist romanticising and the reproductive and racialising energies that will culminate in the climax of the novel. *Wild Deer* possesses no denouement and we are left at a heightened point in the action of sexual energy. This is where Lewis's narrative voice departs because it cannot move beyond this juncture of a seeming recidivism as the fragile black tribal girl is nothing but a vessel for the acclamation of a new, purified race. This is the formative instance of the limit and liminality of imagination of which I have spoken throughout this chapter.

The reproductive energies and fate of the black American subject at the conclusion of the text suggest a manifestly Calvinistic ethos, where the pleasures of difference are denied and the asexualised presence of black difference remains safely at the edge, the liminal point of the white liberal female subject's imagination. However, the description of de la Harpe's travel experiences at this point are layered with sexuality and desire, subsumed beneath Lewis's mythopoeic musings and avoidance of the normality of the longings of desire and identity outside the space of familiarity.

When de la Harpe steps ashore at the Cape Town docks, and observes the "mist-laden, mournful mountain" (39), he cannot find any presence of the 'wild' Africa, the place of his ancestors that he has sought out:

He stepped ashore, not on African soil, but on the cement paving stones of the docks. He had always pictured

himself leaving the ship in a small boat with an outlandish sail. Perhaps actually stepping out into shallow water on a beach, or on to some primitive jetty.

[...]

“*This is Africa. I’m on the cross. This is crucifixion. I am being crucified...*”

His heart cried out in the heart’s extravagant secret language. Oh, Africa, where are your primeval forests, your swamps–sanctuary for the hunted, weapons against this vile humiliation of the white man’s civilisation... (38, 39)

The return to Africa, the ‘motherland’ as we have read before, stands as a metaphor for the remembering of the history and subjugation of slavery. De la Harpe does not encounter what he had hoped for or expected. The implication is that the black American subject possesses no interest in the complexities of colonial life, but wishes to return to the ‘roots’ of his existence. There is a hint of the savage here, of the suggestion that some part of the performer’s ‘soul’ and cultural identity has never quite ‘escaped’ the uncivilised quality of its origins. As I have said before, de la Harpe is willing to reject the identity that he formed in the United States because he has now returned ‘home’.

As I have shown in the previous discussion of Paul Peregrine, de la Harpe is very different from the other African-Americans who have travelled to South Africa. However, Grainger wisely advises him to be careful in his conduct in South Africa because of the paranoid laws and restrictions of the white regime. She does not view these laws as entirely disagreeable because of the fears of black militancy. As she says: “Well, you might have to convince the government authorities of your *bona fides*. They’ve had trouble here and there in South Africa with visiting agitators, disciples of Marcus Garvey and so on. Generally in the guise of evangelist-revivalists” (31). Here Lewis contrasts the conduct of the legitimate Christian missionaries in the country against the less conventional ones, and the need for de la Harpe to maintain close contact with the former to give legitimacy to his presence in the more unstable parts of the country. There is the American Mission in the Cape where the “educated natives” (47) are to be found. The missions are places of

safety, whether in Cape Town or Johannesburg, and stand in stark contrast to the “big native areas” (47) that exist in the outskirts of the cities. Indeed, de la Harpe is unable to stay in the “native hostel” (47) and must remain at the Father Macmichael’s mission to ensure his safety. This is, of course, evidence of the spatial logic that will become manifest in the apartheid era, and one of the great values of *Wild Deer* is as an historical document that reveals much about the nature of South African society of the 1930s. Early on in the narrative de la Harpe observes the signs of segregation, which are also resonances of the American Jim Crow South: “At the dock gates stood many taxis. Some of them were labelled “For Europeans only”. Others were labeled [sic] “Second class” with no reference to nationality. On each taxi the legend was repeated in Dutch” (43).

After de la Harpe’s agent fails to meet him at the Cape Town docks he encounters Father Macmichael, the character who will facilitate his introduction to South Africa. He tours part of Cape Town and meets a cross-section of people. I have already referred to his encounter with Malay and coloured people and his musings on their differences and similarities to his own culture. Later on, and while waiting for Macmichael in a store of pianos, he hears some contemporary popular African-American music and loses himself in the moment. At this point an instance of the flight into memory is set out: “Africa faded. He had the exact sensation of being in a small American town. He fought desperately to retain his identity, the identity of Robert de la Harpe” (48). We observe here a curious slippage from the conventional realist form into the kinds of mythopoeic musings that Kearney (2003) has derided. The ‘event’ is of interest to us because it indicates something about the nature of Lewis’s thinking on African diasporic history. Some of these musings are bizarre, as de la Harpe reflects on the suffering of African-Americans and responds to the ‘decadent’ music:

All these wounds and stripes-ha! ha! these stars and stripes-of their race were hugged as a hair-shirt is hugged by the self-flagellator. They were exhibited like the heraldic devices of aristocrats. The curving whip, the bowed head, the blood and sweat of the black Man of Sorrows...The rope and the stake of to-day’s martyrs...What else has the negro to be proud of

but that, having miraculously survived, multiplied, firmly planted his feet on the steep slopes of civilisation, he still gazes backward on the majesty of suffering...

Upstairs a new record blared its appalling assemblage of civilised noises. Three months earlier it had vomited its unhappy laughter from every window and doorway in Harlem. Civilised laughter ...

De la Harpe shuddered. Was there still time to return to the dignity of the peasant, away from those offal-strewn steep slopes? Was there still time to stop this mad howling of slaves barred and chained in the walls of their freedom? In the prison-house of civilisation what was to become of them all, and where would Peace be found?

De la Harpe became aware that at the bottom of his twofold mission to Africa was, in the deep soil of his heart, a third. The quest for Peace had brought him so far. (49)

There is a note of tragedy in this moment, and by tragedy I mean the failure of the author to do anything but be sensitive to the plight of black American people. Lewis questions if black people have achieved anything but survive the suffering inflicted by slavery. While it is admirable that she is able to empathise with this position, the only way in which she can reconcile the differences between black and white people, between coloniser and colonised, is to construct the African-American subject in this case as a martyr. This martyrdom ensures the hegemony of the British colonial presence in South Africa and on the rest of the continent, and she proposes that through this profound moral sacrifice, the goal of peace will be achieved. That becomes de la Harpe's manifest mission in Africa. Yet she is naïve. To give credence to her unrealistic and idealised model of race relations, de la Harpe must deny his experience, culture and history formed in the United States; he must forget the revolutionary and assertive music of Harlem with its "appalling assemblage of civilised noises". The visceral quality of this sound stands in stark contrast to the transcendent moral cause of suffering that she sees it necessary for de la Harpe to follow. Of course, the black subject must engage in an act of self-obliteration to allow the white minority to maintain its

authority. As we have observed constantly, Lewis can never reach beyond an acknowledgement that the black subject in Africa and the United States has suffered, and demands of them a superhuman sacrifice to ensure the survival of empire, both European and American. But de la Harpe has also come to Africa to educate the black people about civilisation and white South Africans about black people and their ability to be civilised.

Never before in a work of fiction had the politics of identity between blackness and whiteness been so closely contested and questioned. The voice of history and ideological intent that called to Lewis in the liberal political space that we have already established earlier in this chapter, was of only finite influence however. The strangeness and innocuous quality of her writing arises because of the interiority of her vision and the narrow confines of sexual and intellectual desire that frame her imagining of selves and the otherness of the black American subject. As her writing space, and here I mean the physical one, is defined by the domestic setting of the porch of the house in the Johannesburg suburb, the nexus of political and social forces that gathered to the forming of her most 'personal' narrative, exhibit the tendencies of a subject caught up in the narrow vision of the ideologue.

It would be of little value to continue this discussion because the compromised nature of Lewis's thinking has been outlined throughout. The rest of the novel is devoted to de la Harpe's experiences of Johannesburg, which we have considered at other points in the analysis as well. The major plot event of the novel takes place when an Afrikaner (Dutch) riot at one of his performances is thwarted by the power and presence of his own voice. After further conversations with Grainger, the impossibility of any form of transcultural imagining is enforced. While as I have stressed throughout that *Wild Deer* was remarkable for its time because Lewis attempted to imagine an intercultural dialogue, the novel's resounding failure takes place at its conclusion. This is when de la Harpe left the city for the native reserve and has married a Macas tribal girl. He has not done this for romantic purposes and this part of the narrative's function is to set out Lewis's ideas on race and eugenics.

It might be called the concluding, reproductive moment:

Now in this profound aloneness that fell on them he was

conscious of an overpowering hunger for the illuminating realities of the flesh, for the peace that follows, and the deep, rejuvenating sleep in which mind and body flourish like grass in spring.

He lay motionless, as if he were listening to a long absent footstep. Afraid to frighten it away...

In that moment of stillness there flowed into his consciousness words his mind had surprisingly uttered in the dusk and the space of an African landscape: "Not I, oh, my country! But if a son of mine be born..."

He became deeply abashed that the overpowering enchantment of his art should have made him almost forget the greater implications of his presence in Africa. There was something greater lying in this woman's body than the satisfaction of long-sleeping desire, the stimulation of ecstatic brain. Yet it was by the enchantment of art that Nature had led him to this moment of consummation. There came over him, mingling with this pagan creative energy, the rare, exalted yet earth-bound motive of the sexual instinct - the urge to extend life.

He had never had a child. His wife had, he knew, always slyly baffled his desire for a child.

Wordless he gave himself up to the gathering pressure of mind and body, vehemently clinging to the desire to create new life through this unspoiled and tender flesh beside him.

The girl's unbearable meekness smote him...

With a low, pitying exclamation he turned and caught her to him. She trembled with happiness, whimpered at first her self-pity for sorrows past...

The child was too immature for strong passion. Her docile body was all he needed: this flawless vessel made for the safe keeping of his racial heritage, the life-spring of a thousand ancestors...For safe keeping, for hidden growth, birth, blooming-that new life which is the only immortality man

may seize for himself...

In the profound creative joy of the male he felt no need for the responding cry of a mate. He craved only this dumb meekness of the empty vessel, of the intellect still sleeping. This was no longer a human being he overshadowed but Africa herself, a nation to be. (346-347)

* * *

Notes

1. See Figure 14.

2. Predictably, and because of Lewis's ambiguous pseudonym, the reviewer and Marxist commentator Dora Taylor assumes she is a male author. This suggests something about the gender politics of the time, of course; Lewis can only be taken seriously as a voice for the black subject if she writes through the masculine voice and from a position of safety. She is, through the convention of writing, engaged in act of camouflage, where the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for a white woman are maintained and the fear and threat of the black man toward the white female can be thwarted through an act of concealment. This masking takes place throughout Lewis's writing career, except for the *Trader Horn* series where the excitement of exotic Africa in the colonial imagination overtakes any of the necessities of obscuring the facts of one's 'real', gendered identity.

3. This is a term of American origin and now of only historical relevance. It was also used in nineteenth-century South Africa.

4. The so-called lasciviousness of the white female subject is explored in other writing of the period (Cornwell 1996). When Dora breastfeeds her second child, Andrew's "pure white " son Olaf, she is "[s]hameless as a savage [...] almost flaunting her tigerish duties until the day when Andrew ordered her to her own room' (Lewis 1925:155). Andrew's revulsion at the spectacle of his son "feeding at her breast" is described as "something stronger than an outrage to his delicate boyish instinct" (1925:156). As Morgan (2004:116) writes, the suggestion is that "it is not simply the act of overt breast-feeding in general that disturbs him, but the specific feeding of his pure-blooded child by her." She continues in a rather visceral tone, appropriate to the context in which she is writing: "Implicit is Dora's metaphorical contamination through her previous sexual contact with a man who was not white, and through her bearing of his mixed-race child, a contamination

that still stains her body and the milk she produces" (2004:116). Breast-feeding itself becomes a sexual act because of the transference of bodily fluids, as blackness becomes an infection that has cut through the borderlines of moral and natural behaviour.

To arrive at a tragic end, and to reveal the wages of the sin of miscegenation, Andrew's white son Olaf dies from an infection contracted from his coloured 'son' Charlie. He is an "infectious" case (Lewis 1925:205), and Olaf is "symbolically wiped out by Charlie's impurity" and "the representation of Charlie as a tainted presence at the heart of the family is similarly suggestive of a domestic/sexual corruption that cannot be evaded" (Morgan 2004:117).

5. The discourse of miscegenation in South Africa may be read interestingly in relation to American thought. Katherine Ings (2006), for example, considers nineteenth-century American fictions of interracial romance in the United States. She analyses a hoax pamphlet: *Miscegenation* (1863) that sought to antagonise its white male readership through encouraging sexual relations between white woman and black men. Interestingly, the text gave hope to white women who were unable to express their interracial desires. Ings's contribution is important, because through a double focus, she suggests that nineteenth-century authors of the interracial romance borrowed from the masculinist discourse of science, employing the terms of hybridity, such as "crossing" and "blood-mixing." She reads *Miscegenation* as a sort of scientific romance itself. The racialising discourse of *Wild Deer* uses similar language and "miscegenation was intrinsic to the elaboration of the biological fiction of racial identity in South Africa" (Blair 2003:582).

Similarly, in another study, *Breeding Problems* (1998), Nancy Castro refers to the early-twentieth-century American eugenicists' obsession with miscegenation as a Caribbean and Latin American phenomenon. Castro employs the interesting concept of "breeding work" in her analyses of several texts, and especially those of Toni Morrison and Michelle Cliff, and their fictional responses to the slave-masters' eugenic discourse of race. Castro refers to the juxtaposition of miscegenation and segregationism in several writings. In *Wild Deer*, reproduction on eugenic principles becomes the source of regeneration and rebirth of true blackness. As de la Harpe reflects later in the novel when he is recently married to his young tribal wife, Narida: "this marriage of his was no more brutally material than the marriages laid down by eugenists, in which, for the good of the race, two animals of known pedigree are mated for the purposes of producing healthy stock". From our present perspective, and most offensively, de la Harpe thinks of the lobola (bride price) that he paid in the form of cattle to the "father of this child who was his wife". He finds this notion objectionable, and it seems that to Lewis, this concept of a bride price has connotative connections with the breeding arrangements for stock.

6. Wolfe is troubled by his attraction to the black woman, Nhiliziyombi, and while cross-racial liaisons were legal until 1927, he is unable to transgress so completely the social prohibition on racial mixing. In assessing the novel's place in South African literature, Blair writes that "Plomer's confrontational approach proves too radical, not only for his audience but for his protagonist, so much so that his novel risks undoing its own indictment of anti-miscegenation [sic] prejudice" (2003:592). In many ways, Plomer's novel is aesthetically superior to *Wild Deer*, and is a more engaging and more complex text. "Plomer's novel ought still to be valued for the witness it bears to the power of the 'emotional' in the formation and maintenance of human identity" (Cornwell 2003:42). Plomer writes throughout about the failure of European civilization in Africa, and while laudatory of its civilising efforts, is critical of the colonial authority that maintains its presence in Africa: "Plomer satirizes the hypocrisy and turpitude of white colonials, not out of any hope that they will mend their ways, but in a spirit of repudiation and personal disavowal" (Cornwell 2003:53). Perceval Gibbon's *Margaret Harding* is also of interest because the author's representation of the relationship between an African man and a white woman shows his awareness that this is a doubly taboo subject that entails "the violent reversal of a whole mythology of patriarchal, European occupation of Africa, and the equally violent dislocation of the traditional proprieties of sexual possession" (Van Wyk Smith 1990:56). But writers are not compelled to be consistent in their opinions: Gibbon, the 'enlightened' author of *Margaret Harding*, is also the author of a novel, *Souls in Bondage* (1904) which is one of the most insantly racist novels in South African literature.

7. Millin writes:

In the Cape Colony they [the halfcastes or coloureds] had political and industrial, if not social, opportunities, but they barely availed themselves of them. They achieved nothing of any consequence. Now and then (very seldom) it might happen that a real black man, the son of some African chief, rich in land and cattle (not so many of these left, either), would struggle as far as an English or Scottish university, and, through it, to a profession; and would come back to South Africa to practise that profession. But he would never really succeed at it. Putting aside all question of prejudice, he could not hold his own against white competition. He had not the brain, the persistence, the temperament. Nor would his white colleagues greatly trouble their heads about him. They would hardly think him worth discussing. "Not so much good," they would briefly say, and thus dismiss the subject. And

still this aboriginal would have done what practically no halfcaste ever succeeded in doing. [1986 (1924):228-229]

8. Women such as Brittain and Holtby were what Virginia Woolf called “the daughters of educated men” who “throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century sought honest, respectable, public, middle-class, non-domestic [sic] labour [sic] and caused such controversy that we, at the beginning of another new century, still deal with its echoes” (Doran 2005:3). I do not know if the same could be said of Lewis and her experiences in South Africa, but she was a middle-class woman who was conscious and wrote of the world. This flow of European ideas would allow for an important colonial appropriation and local interpolation in Lewis writing, despite its melodramatic tendencies. Holtby, for example, has an interesting connection to South Africa – at least in fictional interests and concerns: in *South Riding*, she writes of the consecutive engagement of her protagonist, the character Sarah Burton, to three different men who are, at the time of the heroine’s reflections and narrated reality, deceased. The second of these husbands is a South African farmer whom she quarrels with over political differences. Such a South African presence in the plot of the novel suggests something about Holtby’s liberal proclivities and her connections to the country and association with Lewis. In addition, Nobel laureate-to-be John Galsworthy visited South Africa several times and in 1928 met Lewis and her co-author Alfred Aloysius Horn at her home in Johannesburg (Couzens 1992b:28). The fame gained from the *Trader Horn* series would have given Lewis a particular international notoriety and would have helped to her to garner more intellectual and literary contacts outside of the parochial confines of South Africa. Galsworthy would write an endorsing foreword to the first book in the series and the association would be important for Lewis’s developing literary reputation. The support that Brittain and Holtby provided in the first instance was instrumental in Lewis’s developing the confidence to carry on writing. The association resulted in her connecting with Margaret and William Ballinger, the trade unionists that would play an important role in South Africa’s liberal movement and trade union history.

9. Brittain would write posthumously of Holtby’s experiences in South Africa, while mentioning Lewis just before this point in the text:

By the time that she left South Africa, Winifred felt that the comfort of its white population and the high standard of living attained by its white wage-earners were purchased at the expense of the native inhabitants, and she knew that those who enjoyed these advantages would fight to retain them. Her sense of justice urged her to protest, and even from far away, to help in resolving this conflict. She returned to England determined to rouse public

opinion, and to urge those friends who shared her outlook to cooperate with the black people in a campaign for removing the cruelties and repressions which weighed so heavily on her conscience. (1940:235)

10. The first book in the series, developed into a financially successful film in was released in 1931 when the 'talkie' era was a recent phenomenon, and was nominated for several Academy Awards (Prindle 1996) and the first of its kind to be entirely shot on the African continent.

11. Lewis reasons her liberal-segregationist position in an essay titled "Psychology of Race" (Lewis 1926), published in the liberal journal *Voorslag*, edited by Roy Campbell and William Plomer. She makes extended reference to the work of Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalgeri, an Austrian race theorist who, as she suggests, writes with "precision and monotonous but impressive thoroughness" (1926:19) of the imperative of racial harmony. Lewis is quick to emphasise the differences between 'country' and 'city', favouring the incorruptible virtue of the former. She recognises that the "civilised" state (1926:19) reflects the proletarian and authoritarian class differences of society that are defined through these contrasts of place.

12. As Dora Taylor writes:

[...] [S]uch humanitarians [as Lewis], whether they like it or not, find themselves in line with the most rabid nationalists, with that section of the community which shouts most about preserving race purity and white domination. In a word, the policy of bidding the African to go back, to separate himself from the menace of civilisation, smells of nothing less than – segregation. The nationalists also talk about letting the African develop along his own lines, but this only masks a policy of social segregation while keeping him on tap for economic purposes. They have no intention whatever of losing him as an indispensable source of labour.

If those people who, because of a deep hatred of his present position, regret the loss of his (imaginary) idyllic state, would look forward instead of backward, they might find a more dynamic solution to his problem. His contact with an industrial civilisation is a fact, it is inescapable. For white or black to try in one way or another to evade it is to bid the waves of the sea to recede at one's own bidding. To come in contact with Western civilisation will mean progress for the African just as soon as he

is free to share the fruits of its culture instead of being menaced by its brutalities and fed on the dregs of it. When the romantic [such as Lewis] speak about keeping “the child” in the nursery it is sentimental nonsense: the same phrase used by the political exponents of trusteeship is the rankest hypocrisy in view of the fact that “the child” carries the burden of the nation’s labour. Nor does one legislate so fiercely against the child one wishes to protect. The African has every reason to suspect that he is being deliberately prevented from ‘growing up’ and proving what progress he is capable of. (Taylor 2002(1942):57-58)

13. As Smuts (1929:77) continues:

The native just emerged from barbarism was accepted as an equal citizen with full political rights along with the whites. But his native institutions were ruthlessly proscribed and destroyed. The principle of equal rights was applied in its crudest form, and while it gave the native a semblance of equality with whites, which was little good to him, it destroyed the basis of his African system which was his highest good.

14. Winifred Holtby, for instance, would go on to write the comic novel, *Mandoa! Mandoa!* (1930) which had an African theme. She and Lewis would encourage Kadalie to attend the International Labour Conference in Geneva in 1927, procuring funds to do so from their own and other liberal-minded sources.

15. Essie, or Eslanda, was Paul Robeson’s wife, and the subject of the fifth chapter of this study.

16. American biographers of Robeson such as Boyle and Bunie (2004) differ from Couzens. They write that the South African and British press were improperly “egged on” by a story that William Ballinger had fabricated. They write that in Ballinger’s falsification could be found a kind of “advocacy journalism”. They suggest that Ballinger circulated a story that Robeson had decided to move to Africa, “share the life of the natives,” and work for the rights of “his people” there. [...] Ballinger fed the gossip mill by inferring political meanings in any mention Paul made of Africa” (2004:318). In response, an unnamed black South African, writing in the *Cape Times* on January 2, 1935, commended Robeson’s plan to visit South Africa suggested that it was “mischievous” of Ballinger to suggest that Robeson’s motives were “political”:

Mr Ballinger has no status as representative of the ‘race’ either

here or abroad [...] and at most can claim to speak only for white organizations interested in the non-Europeans. [...] Anyone who suggests even inferentially, that a man of Robeson's calibre would have either the time or the stupidity to come all the way to South Africa in order that he might be challenged for his 'pass' by a Transvaal policeman [...] either just does not know what he is talking about, or else is naturally reckless in his statements. (in Boyle & Bunie 2004:318)

The unnamed black commentator seems more aware of the realities of South African life and is very different in stance from Ballinger's idealism. It is certain, however, that white South African authorities would have treated Paul Robeson very differently because of his international standing. This can be seen from the treatment that his wife would receive on her arrival in Cape Town in 1936. She writes that she was an object of fascination for both white and black South Africans (Robeson 1936a; 1946) because of her 'civilised' character traits, bearing and command of English.

17. Such an idea was also Jeffersonian in origin (Kazanjian 1998; Saillant 1998), and some white Americans saw the purpose of black Americans as signifiers, propagators of the light of civilisation (capitalism) for black Africans. This was meant to discourage the latter from moves toward Communist ideals, whose Russian proletarian Revolution was still fresh in the minds of the subjugated and marginalised. This, at the least, would have been agreeable to Lewis because it did not represent any direct threat to white colonial hegemony on the African continent.

Instead of registering the immense differences in educational levels which existed amongst black people (as they did between whites) Lewis was more concerned with the 'threat' of the polemics of Marcus Garvey whose Universal Negro Improvement Association with its 'Africa for the Africans' motive was firing the passions of diasporic peoples and black South Africans at the time. As he writes, for instance: "[...] Where is the black man's government? [...] I saw before me then, even as I do now, a new world of black men, not peons, serfs, dogs, and slaves, but a nation of sturdy men making their impress upon civilization and causing a new light to dawn upon the human race" (Garvey & Garvey 1967:126). "[The black man's] only hope lay in the establishment of an independent Negro nation, the logical location for which was in Africa, where the bulk of the race still lives and white political control is not yet completely established." (Standing 1934:189-190).

For white liberals such as Lewis, and white South Africans and the government generally, Garvey's ideas were dangerous. A conservative white American commentator described Garvey as a "full-blooded black of some education [with a] remarkable ability as a crowd orator. Influenced by his early contacts in

Jamaica, he became fired with an ambition to be the Moses who should lead his people out of bondage” (Standing 1934:189). Garvey’s “populist” ideas rose to prominence in the 1920s and affected Kadalie (Couzens 1984:v). Garvey felt that the black subject should develop independently of the influence of the white colonial presence, both politically and culturally. As CLR James - admittedly a Trotskyite - wrote, “All the things that Hitler was to do so well later, Garvey was doing in 1920 and 1921. He organized storm troopers, who marched, uniformed in his parades, and kept order and gave colour to his meetings” [1985 (1938):53]. Lewis’s suspicion of this movement was understandable given its radicalism and threat to white colonial control.

18. The ideological undercurrents of this are focussed on in Hannah Arendt’s writing on South Africa of the 1930s in her major work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* [1979 (1951):186-221]. The after-effects of Nazism would lead to the concept’s moral rejection by the world outside South Africa. It is the intention of Arendt’s intellectual project to trace the development of these tendencies before the rise of the Third Reich, and their adoption by the Afrikaner right (National Party) that would come to power in 1948. Ironically, Garvey’s ideas on eugenics and racial superiority could be said to serve as a counterpoint to Lewis’s, and in them we observe the ideological flux and uncertainties of the early thirties that would lead to the Second World War, with those ideas becoming unthinkable after the horrors of Hitler’s Germany.

19. On the face of it, African society was ripe for rebellion, what with the harshest socioeconomic conditions that were the result of the Great Depression of 1929 being experienced by black South Africans. But the reality was that, except for the gentle protest campaigns of the ANC, black opposition had all but collapsed. By 1929, Kadalie’s ICU was lacking in credibility, swamped by financial scandal, the object of recrimination by embittered members, and rent by splits in its leadership. By the time William Ballinger arrived in 1928 to try to sort out the union’s affairs, there was little he could do to stop its disintegration. He openly criticised the ICU’s leadership for its financial chaos and he and Kadalie came to loggerheads. There was little reason for Lewis’s concerns at the time of the publication given that the efforts of British socialism in South Africa had resulted in the removal of the ‘red threat’ or at least pacifying its most aggressive adherents.

This was quelled in the South African case and it is disappointing that Kadalie failed as an effective black union leader because of his personal weaknesses. Militant African nationalism had lost its ability to influence and this led to a temporary lull in the black struggle for liberation, partly due to the compliance of the ANC and partly through government repression. After she had been disillusioned by Kadalie, Lewis’s search for a new leader “centred for a while on Selope Thema” and the idea of merging the ICU and the ANC. She imagined this

leader, later, somewhat in the form of de la Harpe. Lewis was, for Kadalie, one of those “European friends who, in one way or the other, afforded us assistance and advice [...] a novelist who did much work for the ICU behind the scene” (Kadalie 1970:178-179). Lewis felt that there was a “need of a white man to make himself available to advise and moderate the I. C. U.” (Couzens 1984:xiii) and this came in the form of William Ballinger, whose journey she funded through the success of the first *Trader Horn* novel and her sacrificing of a visit to the United States. Her association with the ICU was “complex” (1984:ix) and despite her United Party conservatism she would write, “I am a conservative but I have to swallow conservatism in my efforts to find the right way of helping the native to find his feet” (1984:ix).

20. Couzens writes of *Wild Deer* and *Mandoa! Mandoa!*,

There are thus two sadly neglected novels which deal almost directly with Kadalie and the I. C. U. Both developed out of disillusion with Kadalie although both writers implicitly respond to his charisma. Both books were written by women centrally concerned with the I. C. U. and its related events. They are a small part of the story of the I.C.U. (1987:51)

In his work, Couzens observes the important interconnections between history and fiction. This is vital to our understanding and analysis of *Wild Deer*.

21. Because Paul Robeson had found a lack of discrimination in the Soviet Union, he frequently contrasted his acceptance there with the treatment of black people in the United States. He “discovered the Negro spirituals in the mid-20s, at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, and his performances of them justifiably made him famous. They [were] perfect vessels for his gifts. His bass-baritone voice had a warm, weighty radiance, like a boulder glowing in a fire. Its expression of pain was an elemental reassurance” (Siegel 1998:20).

22. Lucy Harth Smith is particularly sensitive to the emotional impact of black American music and performance. In the way that Lewis represents de la Harpe, we sense the way in which such musics would have moved her. The purpose of such forms of performance, referenced in both the figures of Robeson and Hayes, was for Lewis the inculcating of racial harmony. Through their own achievements, Lewis felt that the benevolence of the Anglo-American colonial presence could be seen. Hayes knew musicians from West Africa in London and when he arrived there in 1921 became part of the “black community” and in a sense became “British” (Green 1982:29-30). “The fact of the social mixing of these varied black groups in Britain with blacks from elsewhere in Africa and from the United States

gives rise to some interesting speculation as to the influence of their various folk musics on perceptive and schooled black musicians” (Green 1982:31).

Chapter 5

MRS ROBESON IN SOUTH AFRICA: ETHNOGRAPHIC IMAGININGS IN AN AFRICAN JOURNEY

This is a dark world, dark with a vivid, live kind of darkness. The people here in Harlem are much like the people elsewhere in [New York], except for slight physical and temperamental differences. But these differences are so exciting to the senses that they suggest a foreign people: the rich colours of the skin, the large, flattish noses with widespread nostrils, the thick lips, the kink of the hair, the dazzling flash of strong white teeth, vaguely hint of the jungles of Africa and of cannibal islands.

Eslanda Robeson,
Paul Robeson, Negro

Experiences with whites and blacks, with Sotho speakers and Xhosa speakers, with struggling artists and new black executives forcibly reminded me of the difference between blackness and African-ness. I was inside and outside, simultaneously; an African American, I was a 'known stranger'.

Amanda Kemp,
Unpublished PhD dissertation, 1997

Eslanda Robeson,¹ near the conclusion of the account of her *African Journey* (New York 1945; London 1946)², and in a contemplative mood, writes of the end of the conflict in the European theatre of the Second World War and its significance for colonial relations throughout the world. Her reflections occur ten years after her 1936 'expedition' to Africa (see Figure 17), because in the aftermath of the war people of liberal-humanist conscience were rethinking their responses to the concerns of the colonised. Eslanda's preoccupation with colonisation is understandable in that the victory over fascism in Europe meant that her attention and that of her husband was free to shift to non-democratic regimes elsewhere, such as those in the European colonies and the Middle East. At this point the USSR was aligning itself with the cause of colonised peoples who were suffering under the plight of imperialism, and Eslanda and her husband Paul admired Josef Stalin for the role he played in supporting national minorities.³

Both Eslanda and Paul would face persecution by the United States government during the McCarthy witch-hunts of the 1950s, because of their admiration for the Soviet Union's "extraordinarily tolerant and equitable racial attitudes" (Young 2004:222). They were on close social terms with several other leftist African-Americans, who constituted an important political force in the struggle against global imperialist hegemony.⁴ A reviewer of *African Journey* is quick to mention that Eslanda is "[t]he wife of the world-famous American-Negro singer, Paul Robeson [...] a woman of great intelligence, grit and good-nature" (Thomas 1946:159), indicating society's admiring awareness of her, and at the same time a somewhat patronising tone. Understandably, given the sexist bias of the day and Paul's enormous talents, he has been allowed to overshadow his wife, even in the area of anti-colonialism. His life and that of his wife was to become one of continual struggle in the face of recriminations from the US State Department, which in the 1950s withdrew their passports, and he was to make much of this in his autobiography, *Here I Stand*. His was a life-long struggle to establish a place for himself as an African-American in the world, though by the 1950s he would become a "political pariah in his own country" (Von Eschen 1997:184) and as he would lament in 1957: "I think a good deal in terms of the power of black people in the world. [...] If I could just get a passport I'd just like to go to Ghana or Jamaica just to sit there for a few days and observe this black power" (1997:184). It was the tragedy of Paul's life to die in relative obscurity in America, and he would suffer several emotional breakdowns due to the alienation both from his own people and the harassment of the American government. The Civil Rights Movement also ignored him in the 1960s due to his previous support for the USSR. Eslanda's *African Journey* has remained in relative obscurity as a text due to this legacy of persecution. She was also an actress and was for most of his career Paul's business manager. A distinguished cultural anthropologist and intellectual, she was always socially aware and returned to Africa in 1946, where she visited the Congo, French Equatorial Africa, and Ruanda-Burundi (now Rwanda) [See Figure 22]. During this visit she noted a growing sympathy for socialism among black Africans. She had travelled to the Soviet Union in 1934 while on tour with her husband, and both of her brothers had emigrated from the United States and lived there for many years. Yet she had come to regard that nation

with scepticism, in part based on feedback from her brothers, though she returned to the country in 1958 and remained there until 1963. At that time, suffering from breast cancer, she returned with her husband to the United States. She died in New York on December 13, 1965 from breast cancer.

Like her husband, Eslanda was committed to fighting for social justice for black people. “Using her visibility as the wife of one of the most recognised Black Americans in the world, Eslanda Robeson carved out a role as a progressive intellectual that lasted until her death in 1965” (Mahon 2006:102). In 1951, she was one of three protesters who disrupted the United Nations post-war conference on genocide, and in 1958 was one of the few women delegates at the All-African Peoples Conference in the newly independent Ghana. She was only able to make the journey after a Supreme Court case reversing the decision of the State Department to revoke her and Paul’s passports. This measure had been determined by the Court to be unconstitutional. Paul was the president of the Council on African Affairs (CAA), the black American organisation that would serve as the centre of the anti-colonial cause and it was his political actions that led to sanctions from the American government.

Eslanda Cardozo Goode Robeson was born in 1896 in Washington, DC. She graduated from Columbia University in New York with a degree in chemistry and married Paul in 1921. In 1936 she visited Africa with the main purpose of engaging in field research for her doctorate in anthropology (though it was in fact a very brief trip), enrolled at the London School of Economics from 1933 to 1935, and graduated in 1937. She later completed her doctorate at the Hartford Seminary in Connecticut in 1945 (185). Apart from her graduate coursework, Eslanda’s visit was informed by several other purposes. She had experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining a visa. Such a visa clearance to Africa, as she learned in the process, was rarely given to African-Americans. Despite bureaucratic obstacles, she obtained the necessary papers after citing her academic curriculum as the purpose behind her visit, and with “credentials from [her] professors” (16). As she writes:

The visas were the real problem. It seems if you are Negro, you can’t make up your mind to go to Africa, and just go.

Not unless you are a missionary. The white people in Africa do not want educated Negroes travelling around seeing how their brothers live; nor do they want those brothers seeing Negroes from other parts of the world, hearing how they live. It would upset them, make them restless and dissatisfied; it would make them examine and re-examine the conditions under which they, as 'natives,' live; and that would never do at all, at all. In fact it would be extremely dangerous. Something must be done to prevent this 'contact.' But what to do? It's simple: just keep all other Negroes out of Africa, except maybe a few who will come to preach the Gospel. (15)

Apart from commenting on the repressive nature of travel restrictions upon black Americans, Eslanda skillfully reverses the colonialist discourse of nativism, constructed in terms of the form of a parody of the white colonial voice. She asserts her place in the world and sees herself clearly in relation to black Africans. Mentioning that the missionary project in Africa is far less threatening to colonialist centres of power, she is obviously aware of the work of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church on the continent. Eslanda goes on to write of the frustration of bureaucratic delays by the South African government in the processing of her visa in London and she suggests that this was done to keep "[African-American] people out" (16). She is well-travelled and responsible for the practical requirements of moving about in the world: "I had a fair amount of experience travelling about with Paul and Larry [her brother] all over Europe and to Russia. On concert tours I always took care of tickets, passports, itinerary, foreign monies for us all" (16).

With a three-week itinerary extending from Cape Town, South Africa, to Cairo, Eslanda suggests that she "planned a rather plastic itinerary" (16). She was accompanied by her son Pauli, then aged eight, to Africa. Her diary and its publication in edited form as *African Journey* in 1946 were records of the travels and encounters of a "political and social activist [and] a black American woman naming and reclaiming her past" (Mason 1990:350). The journey, which took place from June 15 1936 until August 21 1936, a fortnight of which took place in South Africa, and the rest in Uganda and

the Congo, is insightful in the ways that it reveals the sociopolitical realities of that point in the history of South African colonialism.

She describes the progression of her journey and the people that she would encounter on her travels in South Africa:

We made our plans: We would go by sea from England to Capetown (sic) and Port Elizabeth, right at the bottom of South Africa. We would try to connect up with Bokwe, our African friend who had finished medicine at Edinburgh University and gone home to Alice, Cape Province, to practise; and his sister Frieda and her husband Zach Matthews, whom we had known in London when he was attending the Malinowski seminars; they and their children also lived at Alice, where Matthews was teaching at Fort Hare, the African college. Then we would go on to Johannesburg and maybe see the mines; and perhaps work in a trip to Swaziland; and maybe I could manage to run up to see Tshekedi Khama, the African regent we had all been so thrilled about. Then we would go down to Mozambique in Portuguese East Africa, pick up a ship and sail up the east coast to Mombasa, and go overland by train to join Nyabongo, an African student of anthropology at Oxford, who would be at home in Uganda for the summer. It was arranged that Nyabongo would meet us at Kampala and take us out to his home in Toro, where I planned to do my field work on the herdspeople. Then we would fly home from Entebbe. All very ambitious. (14-15)

Eslanda is at pains to stress the complexity of the continent: "One can't talk about Africa as a whole, because Africa isn't a whole. It is a kind of political meatloaf made of a great many different ingredients" (60). In her diary Eslanda describes encounters with everyone from black South African miners, to racist or enlightened colonial officials. She met herders and the Buganda aristocracy in Uganda, in South Africa she made friends with A B Xuma, who was educated in the United States, and who had met DDT Jabavu at Tuskegee in 1913.⁵ What makes her diary significant for South

African historiography and literary studies is its direct experience and representation of the realities of local life, constructed, as this chapter will argue, from the ethnographer's perspective, rich in cultural detail, yet always conscious of her distance from the subjects represented. Eslanda also highlights the greater degree of political awareness she perceived among black Africans in comparison to African-Americans.

This "once-in-a-lifetime adventure" (Robeson 2001:240) was arranged through Paul's friendship with Max Yergan, a black American who had worked for many years under the auspices of the 'Negro' branch of the International Committee of the YMCA in South Africa (see Anthony 2005). He had arrived in South Africa in 1922, working mostly at Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape (Anthony 1991:27-31) and would have encountered Jabavu and several prominent black educated families. Yergan returned to the United States in the mid-1930s, becoming the leader of the International Committee on African Affairs (ICAA) with Paul Robeson's assistance, a black American organisation that had close connections to Jabavu and Xuma. Both spoke at the organisation's first important public meeting in the United States in 1937 (Von Eschen 1997:17-18). There had been a long history of association between Africa-Americans and black South Africans that would be central to the success of the anti-colonial cause. These connections facilitated Eslanda's journey to South Africa, as I have noted, and it is interesting that she encountered educated black people whom she found similar to herself in their interests and professional achievements in the Eastern Cape. Her visit to South Africa was a different experience from her anthropological fieldwork in Central Africa, as her meetings with black South Africans appear an encounter between equals. The separation of an ocean and a diasporic history between them was transcended by a network of affiliations constructed through travel and diary accounts that had been taking place for some time. The educated black class in South Africa resembled its African-American counterpart, both in individual aspirations and reverence for the figure of the cultured intellectual. Missions in both countries provided financial support that made possible the journeys of black South Africans like Jabavu and Xuma to the United States.

Eslanda's visit was, as we have noted thus far, of a different nature: she was at once a political activist, a student and the wife of an important

African-American performer and crusader. Her visit to South Africa, for instance, was arranged by Yergan:

Yergan was fully trusted by the underground black leaders [in South Africa]. He arranged for [Eslanda and Pauli] to stay at the homes of key Africans in the anti-apartheid movement and at his home near Bloemfontein. He subsequently became one of Paul [Robeson's] closest political associates for almost a decade. (Robeson 2001:240)

Paul did not accompany his wife and his son to Africa:

Paul couldn't go to Africa with me. He had contracts ahead for two years and couldn't risk not being able to fulfil them. We knew nothing, firsthand, about climate and conditions in Africa. Paul doesn't stand the heat well, changes of climate are hard on him, changes of diet and water put him off. Perhaps it was best for me to go first, find out as much I could about everything, and next time we could go together. (13)

Yergan and black South Africans were all "concerned with the colonial situation and its effects on Africans" (Anthony 1991:40). This view was similar to those of other African-Americans who felt a sense of deep connection to their ancestral homeland. The Robesons' home base was at this stage London and in it they found a dynamic centre for shared anti-colonial sentiments and the kind of artistic and intellectual landscape and possibilities for employment that the United States did not provide for black people in the 1930s.

When Eslanda published *African Journey*, her travels were already ten years in the past. Although the effect of World War II had been to increase criticism of colonialism, only on the cessation of hostilities was there thought to be publishing space for her journal. It is likely that the availability of her book in London was delayed by a shortage of resources: the American edition of *African Journey* was issued in 1945. At this point, when new preoccupations were at last admissible, both in literature and politics, Eslanda was

concerned to assert the existence of bonds between diasporic peoples and the colonised subjects of declining empires, and to understand their nature. She gestures in her conclusion towards the possibility of a transnational, non-aligned association of formerly colonised peoples. Margo Culley (1985), in her anthology of African-American women's travel writing, situates *African Journey* as an important canonical text in the genre of diary writing and includes extensive excerpts from it, while alluding in a biographical piece on Eslanda (1985:226) to the different roles of Eslanda as writer, intellectual, traveller and anthropologist.

The decades following World War II would see the emergence of formerly colonised countries into global politics as independent states.⁶ As Eslanda suggests in *African Journey*, “race inferiority, tolerated so complacently yesterday because it meant the non-white, today comes out to mean the non-Aryan, the non-Nazi” and “slavery, so complacently tolerated yesterday because it meant the African, comes out today to mean all the conquered peoples” (186). Such an utterance conveys something of the scope that she cultivated through her vocational training in the medical sciences, subsequent graduate education as an anthropologist⁷ and as a well-travelled African-American intellectual, connecting through her political writings to the wider currents of a leftist, international anti-colonial movement. “[T]ravel, which was a reality in the escape of the slave narrative and a reality in the itinerant of the spiritual autobiography, becomes a metaphor for Afro-American women's life as journey” (Mason 1990:337), and in the case of Eslanda, this is a *journey* of the several selves, which I have already enumerated. Mason interrogates this metaphor in relation to Eslanda's writing, an idea that I shall revisit in relation to the author's representation of her journey in South Africa.

These interests are covered in all three books that she published: the biography of her husband, *Paul Robeson: Negro* (1930), and *American Argument*, co-authored with American Nobel literature laureate, Pearl S. Buck, in the form of an extended intellectual conversation on issues of race, coloniality and otherness (Buck 1949). The third book is *African Journey*, which forms the subject of this chapter. *American Argument*, on the other hand, is a “wide-ranging dialogue [...] covering Eslanda's background and the views of [Eslanda and Buck] on American society, Russia, race relations, gender rela-

tions and women's role, education and child-rearing, and many other issues" (Shaffer 1999a:54).

Buck's utterances on race and civil rights reflected the more enlightened cultural theories of the 1930s. As a result of earlier anthropologists like Franz Boas, Americans were steadily accepting non-racialised explanations of cultural difference. In the thirties, race as an affirming theory of inferiority and superiority would be relegated to the more dubious quarters of American culture. Eslanda would be sensitive to these developments, given her own burgeoning interest in anthropology and American cultural politics. In his *Baffin Island Letter Diary, 1883-1884*, Boas speaks to the developing humanism of anthropological practice and the understanding of the 'other':

I often ask myself what advantages our 'good society' possesses over that of the 'savages' and find, the more I see of their customs, that we have no right to look down upon them. We have no right to blame them for their forms and superstitions which may seem ridiculous to us. We 'highly-educated people' are much worse, relatively speaking. (Cole 1983:33)

Eslanda, I think, would have found in anthropology the possibility for transgressing the boundaries of identity and the closed practices of the self, a chance to understand the self in relation to the 'other' of her historical and genetic heritage. While she was more sympathetic to British cultural anthropology in its formation and training of her intellectual self, she would have been sensitive to the wider currents of the world and American society. Certainly, later anthropologists like Bronislaw Malinowski would find in Boas's work an important basis for the development of his own work, though the transcultural empathy and understanding of his work seems to be lacking in that of Malinowski or the metaphoric constructions of Frazer's *Golden Bough*.

One of Boas's students was Melville Herskovits, who would found the African Studies/anthropology programme at Northwestern University in Chicago. His own words on black American identity and the complexities of culture and race in the formation of it reflect this shift in cultural politics and the understanding of difference in the 1930s:

Africans from all portions of the West Coast and the Congo are represented in the New World, while in the United States, Brazil, and the islands and littoral of the Caribbean sea they have crossed with English, Spanish, Dutch, French, Danish, and other European types. In a word, we find all degrees of mixture between numerous types both of whites and Africans present in the region. [...] The cultural background of Africa is better understood than the physical form of the African [...] (1930:148)

Herskovits's words reflect a deepening awareness of the hybrid nature of diasporic identity and its transnational movements. Eslanda would have written herself into this world through her *African Journey*, which became more than an account of a voyage, and also a way for the diasporic intellectual self to establish a sense of location in relation to the world. The delayed publication of Eslanda's travel journal allows her to include within it a process of change and self-discovery within herself, reflected in the conclusions of the work. Her role as public intellectual, both in her own right as a scholar and as her husband's representative, as he became increasingly restricted by the American anti-Communist measures of the Cold War period, motivated her to take up the cause of decolonisation. After this experience, Eslanda's attendance at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco in April 1945 took place in a spirit that allowed her to be as an important voice for the decolonisation movement. She then moved on to New York to work for the Council on African Affairs from September 1945 (Shaffer 1999a:53).

The Council on African Affairs had begun as the International Committee on African Affairs (ICAA) under the leadership of Yergan and with Paul Robeson's assistance, reorganising itself in 1942 to become the Council on African Affairs (Von Eschen 1997:17). "[T]he CAA's militant black international diaspora consciousness marked a shift to independent black leadership" (1997:18) and it became a vital force in the anti-colonial cause. It provided an important forum for the expression and debate of the anti-colonial sentiments of African-Americans, a context in which the after-

math of war had led to the fundamental reshaping of the politics of black struggle: “The rapid acceleration of African and Asian challenges to European domination and the crumbling of European hegemony [...] coincided with the creation of a US wartime alliance with the major European colonial powers and the Soviet Union [...]” (Von Eschen 1997:2). Black American figures such as Paul Robeson, WEB Du Bois, George Padmore and Alphaeus Hunton emerged as important local and subsequently international political figures in the anti-colonial cause, while the work of Marcus Garvey and the United Negro Improvement Association “brought the notion of the links between the black world and Africa to a mass audience” (1997:4). This form of ‘diasporic consciousness,’ a politics of recognition and the erosion of distance caused by dispersal, would have been the context into which Eslanda was writing her ethnography and diary of an *African Journey*. These moves were part of her work to influence the political climate towards decolonisation. In a conversation I had with Paul Robeson, Jr in New York over the telephone (February 2008), he suggested that his mother’s ideas on Africa, its people and the relationship of black Americans to the continent, was a distinct one and should be treated as such. Given the predominance of her husband’s voice in public consciousness, the importance of giving Eslanda’s work a sustained consideration cannot be emphasised enough.

Eslanda would write in the important pamphlet *What do the People of Africa Want?*

Whether we like it or not, Africa is rapidly looming up on the horizon of world thinking. [...] Formerly remote Africa is right round the corner-by plane. It is high time, therefore, that we begin to learn something about this vast continent and its millions of people.

[...]

Black Africa has a history reaching back to the very dawn of human consciousness. Black empires existed for centuries in the Sudan, Central Africa; well established empires with regular succession of rulers, graded organization of court officials and provincial governors, and all the ceremonial incidental to such a political structure. There were tem-

ples, towns, records; there were flourishing markets attended by thousands of people. (1945:7-8)

African Journey is significant in that it is one of the earliest representations of Africa for American and British readerships by an African-American who had travelled in Africa. The text combines “a first-hand critique of European colonialism and racism with a human portrait of the African people and an appreciation of the cultural achievements of African peoples” (Shaffer 1999a:51). Ben Burns (1945:13) writes in the black American newspaper, *Chicago Defender*, that *African Journey* was “perhaps the first really popular book ever written on the African Negro. It [would] make [American] Negroes hold their heads and shoulders high, proud to be Negro and African.” Eslanda’s encounter with South Africa prior to the cementing of white minority power in the country was permeated by awareness of the hardships and social injustices facing the local black population.

African Journey was first published in New York by the John Day Company,⁸ headed by Pearl S. Buck’s husband, Richard Walsh. Buck began writing to Paul Robeson after they shared a platform at an April 1942 rally. The purpose of the rally was the advocacy of equal rights for black Americans and Africans fighting in World War II (Shaffer 1999a:51). In the autumn of 1943 Buck wrote an appraisal of an early version of Eslanda’s manuscript which led to its favourable reception by the publisher (Shaffer 1999a:51). The reviewer Carter G Woodson, a pioneering African-American historian and intellectual leader of his generation, however, offers criticism about the book which suggests its originality and the way in which it disappoints conventional expectations of travel on the ‘Dark Continent’, yet lauds it for its success as a travel account: “This work has an all but misleading title for the reason that it does not show deep penetration of the interior of the African continent. It is really a diary interspersed with observations” (Woodson 1945:445). Woodson goes on to claim that Eslanda focuses her energies only on the coastal areas of Africa, though in fact she travels in the interior of South Africa, the Congo and Uganda. He also inappropriately deploys the masculinist-colonialist discourse of “penetration” in suggesting what is lacking from Eslanda’s entry into Africa. Given the complexities of her position as a travelling, female, African-American subject, his misunderstanding is

revealing and further complicates our reading of her representation of self, location and identity.

Another commentator, HB Thomas, also fails to understand the purposes of Eslanda's text, and the differences between his verdict and that of Woodson are telling: "A substantial service could be rendered to the unravelling of the tangled skein of racial relations in Africa by a frank appraisal from an intelligent observer of African kin. It is a pity that Mrs. Robeson has not quite risen to her opportunity – though her record is of value as indicating what is stirring in African minds" (1946:160). Thomas also highlights the "great responsibility" (1946:160) that Eslanda and her husband bore in mediating the representation of Africa to audiences of the north, and suggest this mediation might take the form of interpreting the colonised to the metropolitan imperialist. He seems to have seen them as exemplifiers of WEB Du Bois's idea of "double consciousness, "since although they were black, they embodied in their professional and intellectual lives the tenets of 'civilisation.'" He believed that they could become intermediaries between the African and the American historical-behavioural positions, in that they might have access to and sympathy with the struggles of indigenous African peoples. Woodson further considers the complexities of the relationship between African-Americans and Africa, diasporic subjects and people of the 'homeland', separated by the violence of enslavement.

As a rule Negroes are not permitted to conduct investigations in Africa. A few who have gone there as missionaries have reported on the inequalities, injustices and atrocities in some areas. Most of the Negro missionaries to Africa, however, have not been sufficiently trained to present their thoughts in literary form. Some of them, moreover, assume the attitude of treating the Native as an undesirable who can be saved only through such psalm-singing as they bring. [...] The public should welcome, therefore, the production of Mrs. Robeson as a step in the right direction; and in the projected reconstruction schedule to follow this war, other Negroes with the same purpose may have an opportunity to delve more deeply into African affairs. (1945:446)

Eslanda suggests that “[t]he Gospel always helps to keep [black African and black American] people quiet and resigned” (15-16), and Woodson sees Eslanda’s role in presenting Africa to the western mind as valuable because she is unusual.

Other American black visitors such as Ralph Bunche, to whom I shall refer later in this chapter, would be part of a subsequent wave of African-Americans who travelled the continent with a degree of openness to the value of indigenous African culture and a wish to recover the ancestral past. Within this context of travel I might also mention the 1921 visit of James K Aggrey’s visit to Africa, recorded in Edwin Smith’s *Aggrey of Africa* and the subject of much attention from white colonials and black Africans. In Aggrey’s journey we find the first glints of an expression of pan-African possibilities and recognition of commonalities between the African and black American identities. Aggrey was “synonymous with the Good African, a man who could affect by his powers of interracial sensitivity such a reconciliation of black with white that colonialism could be made acceptable and the black revolution unnecessary” (King 1969:511-512). While King’s words might suggest that Aggrey’s was an obsequious attitude toward colonial authority, the latter was admired by Africans and black Americans alike for his pan-African sensibilities. Importantly, he encountered many of the people at Fort Hare and in Johannesburg who were the focus of Eslanda’s diaristic attentions in *African Journey*. Ralph Bunche also met many of the same people on his trip a year later. A sense of travel and shifting transnational identity punctuates the African-American experience of Africa at this time, which is the concern of this thesis.

The “politics of diasporic identification” as it is framed in Maureen Mahon’s discussion of Eslanda’s journey narrative informs much of our reading of the text in this chapter. She includes the complexities of her engagement with black and white South Africans in Cape Town, the Eastern Cape and Johannesburg, and the record of her fieldwork in Uganda and the Congo. My own focus in this chapter will be mainly on her experiences in South Africa.

The purposes and nature of her journal writing and what she meant to achieve through her representation of Africa are not unrelated to the ac-

counts of explorers or fictions of exploration, nor are they as simply political as Woodson and Thomas felt they should be. She exhibits awareness of the connections, racial, cultural and historical, between African-Americans and the peoples of the African continent. Thus her writing of the experience of travel in Africa and her accounts of local customs are informed by a politics of diasporic connection. Her diary, however, is responsive to the social conditions of the present, yet always intent to place black subjects together in a future of equality and friendship. Early in her text she writes:

I wanted to go to Africa.

It began when I was quite small. Africa was the place we Negroes came from originally. Lots of Americans, when they could afford it, went back to see their 'old country.' I remember wanting very much to see my 'old country,' and wondering what it would be like.

In America one heard little or nothing about Africa. [...] Of course when I speak of Africa I mean black Africa, not North Africa." (9)

This belief in the connectedness of all colonized peoples echoes the words of Fanny Jackson Coppin, who visited South Africa with her husband, Bishop LV Coppin of the AME Church from 1900 to 1904 (Coppin 1904). As Jackson Coppin writes in her *Reminiscences of School Life, and Hints on Teaching*, "[t]o go to Africa, the original home of our people, see them in their native life and habits, and to contribute, even in a small degree, toward the development, civil and religious, that is going on among them, is a privilege that anyone might be glad to enjoy" (1913:122). The presence of African-Americans in the country was complicated by their at times condescending understanding of their presence in the country. Many felt that they were on a civilising mission, which seemed related to the need for self-congratulation of the travellers themselves rather than to the needs of the indigenous people.

The complexities of Eslanda's text are related to its originality: an historical 'first' as the published writing of a secular black female American on the subject of Africa; a journal (containing different kinds of encounters and reflections) and an ethnographic representation of African peoples. It

is in addition an account of the processes in which her research was undertaken, though its original function was that of a diary, and an account of the autobiographical subject's attempts to narrate personal experience and reflect on the complexities of the experience of travel.

I engage here, as I have noted, with a diasporic subject's musings on the sense of her place in the world. Its subsequent preparation for publication must have involved editing and alteration, as its structure and function would change in order to foreground her response to being a black American woman in the rootless state involved in travelling on the 'mother continent' of Africa. (However, this has been difficult to confirm because of lack of access to the original manuscript. Thus, this reading relies entirely on the text in its published form.) My treatment of *African Journey* thus demands a tactical and responsive approach to the work, eclectic in its employment of several forms of critical analysis. I have tried to be sensitive to the historical and physical location of the diasporic and autobiographical subject that is its focus.

With this in mind, it is interesting to consider the moment when Roland Barthes (1982:480-481) asks himself about the purposes behind the writing of his journal:

[Should] I keep a journal with a view to publication? Can I make the journal into a 'work'? [...] [The] aims traditionally attributed to the intimate Journal [...] are all connected to the advantages and prestige of 'sincerity' (to express yourself, to explain yourself, to judge yourself); but psychoanalysis, the Sartrean critique of bad faith, and the Marxist critique of ideologies have made 'confession' a futility: sincerity is merely second-degree Image-repertoire.

As I have noted, Eslanda had had ten years in which to reconsider the journal of 1936. We need to ask what her decisions were (as shown in the text of the diary) about what remained interesting, what would have been discarded from the informal record of her journey, and what the 'subsequent journey of ideas' would become as a published text. We become conscious of two time frames present in *African Journey*: that of 1936 and that of the post-war

world. This latter period concludes the text of *African Journey* itself: the book commences with musings before departure and concludes with the afterthoughts of engagement with the peoples of the ‘mother continent’.

Barthes makes us aware of the creation of an illusion of ‘sincerity’ in an autobiographical text. To write, to inscribe oneself in an account of life, is likely to be an admission of the space and possibility for difference – of a self other than that of the autobiographical subject. It will be the envisioning of the complexities of an encounter with an ‘other,’ and the record of social experiences. In Eslanda’s case, it is an engagement with the politics of the diasporic self as well as with the reality of the African self. The central theme of this chapter, then, is that while I acknowledge that her diary is an obviously subjective text, it is informed in the process of writing by the complexity of the practices of ethnographic and cross-cultural representation. The concern of the chapter remains, however, an extended consideration of the representation of her time in South Africa, though we cannot divorce this experience and its coverage from a necessary consideration of the intellectual formations that were the basis of her sense of self and identity. Occasional reference will be made to the part of *African Journey* that is concerned with her spell in the Congo and Uganda; the moment of fieldwork and recording of cultural detail.

* * *

At the beginning of 1933 Eslanda registered at the London School of Economics (LSE) to study anthropology under the tutelage of Bronislaw Malinowski, amongst others. Social status and professional achievements became for Eslanda the means of embracing the tenets of a society sufficiently cultivated and enlightened to welcome black people. London provided a social landscape to which Paul and Eslanda wished to gain access in the 1930s. They would return to the city in the 1950s, after the US State Department travel ban had been revoked and when they were on close social terms with WEB Du Bois and his wife.

Jan Carew (2004) writes of his association with the Robesons at the time and of the central role of London in Paul’s career. In the early 1960s the Robesons met up with the Du Boises: the latter couple were on their way

to Ghana (2004:45). The British, in providing a more ‘civilised’ space at the centre of their dissolving empire than did the Americans, at the same time provided opportunities for the peoples of the African diaspora to engage in intellectual and political debate. This was the high point of black immigration into the ‘mother country’ (2004:48). Yet Carew mentions that the English were also developing racist tendencies similar to those of their white Southern cousins in the United States. Paul Robeson and WEB Du Bois, visiting London in the early 1960s were seen as “two African American luminaries [who had] had a profound effect on both the leaders and the rank-and-file members of the civil rights movement [in the United States]”. The wider cause of African and African-American political liberation had at this stage a strong “international focus” (2004:48). What makes Carew’s perspective important is his experience of meeting both men at the time, meetings which highlighted the importance of London as a nodal point in the wider network of African diasporic political and cultural relations.

Eslanda’s time in London in the 1930s, and position as an anthropologist-in-training, allowed her to cultivate the ‘literary’ skills that she would require to represent the space of the anthropological subject. Clifford Geertz (1988) suggests that anthropology and its practices of ethnography should be understood as a form of *writing*, in the sense that the boundaries between “ethnography” and “the literary” are illusory, given the self-reflexive nature of both discursive practices. Eslanda’s importance, like that of other African-American women who recorded their travels in the period, depends on the fact that hers was a dissident voice, in that she resisted the conventional myths of the ‘dark continent’. Her writing in *African Journey* may be partly explained by her training in 1934:

I began to read everything about Africa I could lay hands on. This proved to be considerable, what with the libraries of the British Museum, the House of Commons, London University, and the London School of Economics. I began asking questions everywhere of everybody. The reading and the questions landed me right in the middle of anthropology (a subject I had only vaguely known existed) at the London School of Economics under Malinowski and Firth, and at

London University under Perry and Hocart. It was all very interesting and exciting and challenging. At last I began to find out something about my “old country,” my background, my people, and thus about myself. (10-11)

London as the centre of empire, with its cosmopolitanism and ties to many countries on the African continent, allowed Eslanda access to an array of cultural knowledge, providing her with the resources to negotiate a range of histories and a deepening sense of her own placing in the world. Her sense of herself as a diasporic black woman and her wish to visit Africa increased. At this point we can see her as the black American woman intellectual defining her anti-colonial political role. The ambivalent nature of her position as black woman and scholarly subject appears in her use of western science in its construction of the ‘other’ to familiarise herself with African cultures. She was considered “European” by her fellow (white) students at the LSE (11) which she found deeply offensive as she considered herself to be proudly “*Negro*” (11; Eslanda’s emphasis). She drew on her scientific training to understand the various people of the colonised world who came to London. Her movement from being a chemical technician to being a student of the social sciences was an indication of her desire to reach beyond the confines of her undergraduate training. There is an attempt by her, through the discursive practices of a western ontology of scientific practice, to document, to transcribe the substance of African cultures in the interest of valorising their purpose as both a referent for her own African-American identity, and to define a place for herself as a scholar in world, versed in the practices of anthropological knowledge construction.

Eslanda’s exposure to Malinowski had been through graduate seminars and coursework, and his ethnographic work served as an inspiration for her own fieldwork and research. Her experience of graduate education in London, however, was not ideal, though her appetite for learning was stimulated: “After more than a year of very wide reading and intensive study I began to get my intellectual feet wet. I am afraid I began to be obstreperous in seminars. I soon became fed up with white students and teachers ‘interpreting’ the Negro mind and character to me” (11). Her frustration stemmed from her complex position within student society in London; she

came to be the 'voice' of African-American people in the imperial centre. She was particularly frustrated by Western science's presumptuous speculation on the "primitive mind" (11); a symptom of colonialism's construction of the 'other' as outside the 'civilised', and as incapable of logical thought. She goes on to parody the typical tone of the colonial: "[W]e've studied them [the natives], taught them, administered them, worked with them, and we know" (12).

Her position as outsider was accentuated by their awareness of her ignorance of Africa: "You've never been out there, you've never seen *them* and talked with *them* on their home ground; you can't possibly know (12; my emphasis). This archetypal colonial voice was making a valid point here, though Eslanda's caricature of it reveals much about the nature of its assumption of superiority in the representation of the other. Eslanda sought to transcend the limits of colonialist empiricism by negotiating a place for herself as a travelling black American woman in the world, desirous to recover some sense of her ancestry in the "old country". She would later employ the practices of ethnography to engage with African peoples and to salvage some sense of her ancestral identity.

Paul, however, writing in the *Spectator* on June 15, 1934, rejected to a greater degree western notions of knowledge and epistemology:

The white man has made a fetish of intellect and worships the God of thought; the Negro feels rather than thinks, experiences emotions directly rather than interprets them by roundabout and devious abstractions, and apprehends the outside world by means of intuitive perceptions instead of through a carefully built up system of logical analysis. (Glücksberg 1947:325)

While Paul rejects western intellectualism and its distance from the subject of observation, Eslanda, in making her decisions as a strong-willed woman and intellectual, values the tools that such analysis and knowledge-construction provides. She goes on to consider the nature of 'educated Africans,' their education in Africa and ability to learn the 'complex' disciplines derived from European education. She is concerned to expose the fallacy of

the 'savage mind': "I asked Africans I met at universities, taking honours in medicine, in law, in philosophy, in education, in other subjects: "What is all this about primitive minds and abstruse subjects, about only simple subjects and crafts in your schools?" (12).

'Oh, *that*,' they said with a twinkle, 'there's nothing primitive about our minds in these universities, is there? And how can we cope with any but simple subjects and crafts in our schools, when that is all they will allow us to have? Actually, they rarely give us any schools at all, but they sometimes "aid" the schools the Missions have set up for us, and those we have set up for ourselves with our own money and labour, but they definitely limit our curricula" (12; Eslanda's emphasis)

Eslanda finds similarity between the colonial education available to black Africans and that available to blacks in the South in the United States, and there is a particular resonance for us here when we recall that she visits University of Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape during her time in South Africa. She approaches the African self in complex ways, negotiating the affinity which she feels and her knowledge that she is different. She skillfully employs European knowledge in an attempt to understand and connect with her "fellow Negroes" (13).

In her own way she masters anthropology, a science of the colonial centre, to establish her right to be seen as a learned black American woman. In his seminal work, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Malinowski had established the primacy of field research in social anthropology and sketched the basis for participant observation, his work indicating "an evolving practice of modern travel" (Clifford 1997:19). Eslanda's travels were not the ideal protracted stay by the fieldworker among the 'natives'; hers was a brief encounter with difference, predicated on her being the public representative of her husband.

Helena Wayne, Malinowski's youngest daughter, writes of his deep influence on women⁹ whom he trained and with whom he associated throughout his life. The most prominent of these was Audrey Richards, who would emerge as one of the most important anthropologists of African cul-

tures in the twentieth century. Wayne (1985:537) also mentions her own encounter as a child with Eslanda and Paul Robeson: “I remember that she and her husband Paul came to our London house for a dinner party, after which Robeson stood at the piano and sang (was it ‘Old Man River’?). I crept down from my bedroom and sat on the stairs listening as the house shook with the marvellous sound.”

What is more remarkable is the commingling of the facts of Malinowski’s life with South Africa. His great interest in women led to many romantic associations, among others with a certain Annie Brunton, a South African woman with whom he travelled around Europe between 1908 and 1910. It was her encouragement and move to London in 1910 that led him to leave his native Poland and train at the London School of Economics to doctoral level in anthropology. “One could say that it was Annie Brunton who brought Malinowski bodily into the English-speaking, English-reading world from the relative obscurity of the Polish language” (Wayne 1985:532). Malinowski’s passage to Englishness mirrors that of one of his contemporaries, Joseph Conrad, who came to admire English civilisation and colonialism in its global influence. It was in London that Malinowski became versed in early twentieth century British anthropology, reading such seminal texts as James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* and Spenser and Gillen’s *The Native Tribes of Australia*.

It was Malinowski’s departure for Australia and the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea in 1914 that brought about the emergence of his field methodology of participant observation, a practice that informs, I argue, the nature of Eslanda’s writing of her travel experiences in Africa. The ethnographic work is much a work of seemingly objective science as it does of the imagination. As Malinowski begins *Argonauts*, he writes, “Imagine yourself set down [...] alone on a tropical beach” (1922:6). He also suggests that the reader should make an heroic attempt to reach the “central mind of the native,” “penetrate other cultures” and “deepen our grasp of human nature” (1922:517). This constitutes a journey into the ‘native’ mind, in this instance, the culture and Kula rituals of the Trobrianders. As Marcuse and Fischer (1986:18) write, “[e]thnography is the work of describing a culture [...] a research process in which the anthropologist closely observes, records and engages in the daily life of another culture.”

Geertz (1973:19) suggests that “the ethnographer ‘inscribes’ social discourse, *he writes it down*. In so doing he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscription and can be reconsulted.” The construction of the ethnographic account is construed as a rhetorical activity, for “[w]e measure the cogency of our explications,” Geertz argues, “not against a body of uninterpreted data [...] but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers” (1973:16). Thus in representing the ‘other’, as Eslanda does in *African Journey* when she describes cultural artefacts and other material attributes of the Buganda people of Uganda, it is the primary motive of the ethnographer “to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision of *his* world” (Malinowski 1922:25; emphasis in original). This is an important assertion for Eslanda’s writing of the world of the African ‘other’ for a western audience.

I am concerned in Eslanda’s text chiefly with the complex interplay between autobiographical experience and the practices of ethnography. Much of her diary is concerned with explication of cultural detail, an adjunct to the procedures underlying her field research in Uganda. As Malinowski continues (1967:83-84):

The integration of all the details observed, the achievement of a sociological synthesis of all the various, relevant symptoms, is the task of the Ethnographer [...] the Ethnographer has to *construct* the picture of the big institution, very much as the physicist constructs his theory from the experimental data, which always have been within reach of everybody, but needed a consistent interpretation.

This relates to the version of functionalist theory of culture that would develop through his ethnographic experiences. Functionalists view society as a system, constituted of social institutions the behaviour of which is related to biological processes, and it is this, which gives rise to the metaphor of the body, which is often used for society. Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown¹⁰ (who also worked at the University of Cape Town from 1920-25) focused on the study of societies, while Franz Boas was more concerned with historical

progression, which reveals the extent to which traits diffuse from one place to another. This led him to view cultural boundaries as multiple and overlapping, and as highly permeable, while the functionalists viewed them as independent elements. Functionalists understand culture as a thing of “shreds and patches,” where individuals try to make sense of their world through seeking to integrate the disparate elements of society. Such integration was “always in tension with diffusion, with any appearance of a stable configuration as contingent, unstable, and always subject to change” (Bashkow 2004:445). I mention all of this to foreground some of the intellectual currents and influences on Eslanda at the time.

In terms the practice of recording of Africa Eslanda focuses on the various people of the continent. Throughout her journey, she is critical of colonialism and the racist practices of colonial authority, and reflects on the cultural knowledge that she accumulates. Ethnographic writing has been criticised by critics such as Louch (1966:160), however, who caricatures it as “travellers’ tales”. It has been further disparaged as “intellectual colonialism in the study of ‘other cultures’” (Sanjek 1993:13). Eslanda wrote to her friends Carl and Fania Van Vechten on April 5, 1934: “I am specialising in African cultures, and am more interested in them than I have ever been in anything. When we get through [our journey], we will know something about ‘our people’” (Mahon 2006:106). There are marked differences between her engagement with the anthropological subjects of her fieldwork in Uganda and her social involvements in South Africa, the latter being the principal focus of my study. It is important however, to allude to her engagement with Central Africans, which is a minor concern of this chapter, if only because it was the declared purpose behind her travels on the ‘mother’ continent.

Her first entry into a ‘tribal village’ parallels Malinowski’s experience in the Trobriand Islands, (Malinowski 1922:5), in that both travellers experienced a degree of uncertainty. In this first encounter, the anthropologist’s ‘skill and subtlety’ must induce “an atmosphere of mutual amiability”; the prudent ethnographer begins “with subjects which might arouse no suspicion.” The distance that Malinowski must have felt from the subjects of his observation was necessarily greater than that which Eslanda experienced in Uganda. She felt she shared a common ancestry with Africans, and during the South African leg of her journey, would share a sense of common identi-

ty with the mission-educated elite of the Eastern Cape. In Uganda, however, she felt an unavoidable distance from the people whom she encountered, when pidgin English was used in preliminary approaches to Buganda tribespeople. As in the case of Malinowski, this unease would soon give rise to an “uncomfortable feeling that free communication in it will never be attained” (Malinowski 1929:240).

This reveals something of the “liminal status of ethnography as both witnessing and bearing witness” (Anderson 1986:64), and of having to *inscribe* social reality. It brings into question my assertion that Eslanda’s *African Journey* is an ethnographic text. In her interactions with Africans, and especially Ugandan peoples in the course of her own field research, Eslanda identified with the aristocracy. This is possibly because Eslanda, originating from the elite professional African-American class in the United States, felt that there were at least some parallels between her own position and theirs. Malinowski came from the educated elite in Poland. Eslanda must also have found it easier to engage with members of the aristocracy because of their access to education, their command of English, and their privileged position under the British colonial authorities.

Eslanda’s account of her travels in Africa indicates an attempt to transgress her position as outsider: she wishes to identify with the colonised, but knows herself to be shaped to some extent by the culture of the coloniser. She wished to write a place for the non-white subject in the world. This appears through her desire to *know* the other, to gain access to its culture and aspirations.

Yet what remains is the impossibility of her achieving an objective cultural representation. Malinowski’s posthumously published fieldwork diaries, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (1967) differ enormously in tone from his ethnographic works. Earlier works such as *Argonauts* and *The Sexual Life of Savages* indicate a stress on the recording of objective reality while his diary reveals his own position as (alien) observing subject. This takes place through the “revelation of elements of brutality, even degradation” (1967:xix) as the compiler of the text, Raymond Firth, notes of Malinowski’s writing.¹¹ Eslanda’s position, given the affinity which she always strives to feel for African people, is not identical with Malinowski’s. Geertz denounced Malinowski as a “crabbed, self-preoccupied, hypochondriacal

narcissist, whose fellow feeling for the people he lived with was limited in the extreme” (Young 2004:xxi), while in the case of Eslanda I sense a desire for commonality in the purposes of the anti-colonial.

Returning then to the relationship between ethnographic text and private account of the process of research in the field, we find in *African Journey* a text that remains hybrid in its formation. Despite the revisions which presumably occurred, it is both diary of the process of research and substantive representation of several African cultures.

I propose that we consider the implications of the interplay between ‘self-reflexivity’ and ‘knowledge’ in the text. I shall attempt a reading of the politics of diasporic identity and self-belonging in *African Journey*, taking into account the practices of ethnography. Here, we must consider the autobiographer who constructs in the text a representation of the ‘reality’ which she has perceived in returning to Africa as diasporic self (Mason 1990). This composite act of recreation is given clarity when considered in relation to the work of Paul Atkinson, whose exploration of the ‘ethnographic imagination’ (1990), in relation to the practice of field research in the social sciences, is offered as the basis for reading twentieth century ethnography. Several commentators have employed this concept: Atkinson’s argument is that the discipline of anthropology contains both a considered examination of the rhetoric of writing and the ‘objective’ study of culture. He observes the slippage between ‘ethnography’ and its analysis, which uses the ‘literary/critical’ means of close reading. This is by no means a new proposition, as several earlier authors have explored the interdisciplinarity of ethnographic texts. The value of Atkinson’s study for this chapter lies in the idea of the ‘ethnographic imagination’ as it is to be observed in the textuality and self-representational practices of *African Journey*.

The term ‘ethnographic imagination’ reflects the confluence of several ideas on textuality and the representation of the ‘other.’ Atkinson is concerned with the “poetics of sociology”. The process of textual construction (rhetorical practice) is taken apart to observe the dynamics of its formation through the application of modes of literary-theoretical analysis. This is done to unravel the workings of ethnographic writing. “There is the perspective of everyday discourse on the natural or social world, and there is the perspective which draws upon the literary discourse of other texts”

(1990:39). It is in the latter process that we find the second of the two bases for the production of the ethnographic text, the first being the ethnographer's observations. When we consider Eslanda's diary, we must be aware of the conventions of the memoir, that author and first person narrator are understood to be the same, and that the author/narrator attests to the truth of what is alleged. Despite these 'guarantees', the imagination in both writer and reader is called into play as the means by which reality in the text is recreated, after the author's observations of social reality.

Eslanda's *African Journey* as ethnographic text and as memoir emerges from the intertextual nature of literary and cultural production. I am by no means arguing for a new form of critical analysis to be applied to it in terms of its dual nature. I rather seek to find a way in which to investigate the modes of self-representation and engagement with the African in the journal, and I argue that several kinds of 'text' are present in the layers of meaning.

I have introduced the concept of the ethnographic imagination as appropriate to close reading of *African Journey*, as I have sought to establish through the consideration of ethnographic practice a basis from which to engage with the complexities of the locations of 'self' and 'other' in this memoir. The ethnographic imagination serves as the means by which social reality is narrativised, a force that reaches beyond Eslanda's coverage of the fieldwork in Central Africa, into the ways in which she represents South Africa, when she is on board ship crossing the Atlantic, in Cape Town, in the Eastern Cape and in Johannesburg. At times the representation seems stultified by the shock of her sense of dislocation from the familiarity of 'home'.

* * *

There is a *visual* moment in Eslanda's diary where the confluences of ethnographic intention and political mission become intertwined and the strict borderlines between the two subsumed under the common impulse to write a place for herself in the world as an African-American woman. She is attempting to establish a place for herself in the world, outside of the orbit of her husband's fame, yet he always remains a *presence* in the text, speaking to her from London, the "Big Paul" whom she must leave behind to assume

part of his sociopolitical responsibility in the encounter with African people throughout the continent. Her son Pauli's accompanying her further suggests the presence of his father. Such evidence is unavoidably present throughout Eslanda Robeson's experience of coloniality, both in the metropole and on the periphery of the colonies.

To return, then, to the notion of ethnographic experience and focalisation in the diary, I am not suggesting that the text is avowedly anthropological in any sense, but is rather inflected by what theorists now view as the entirely subjective nature of ethnographic writing, in itself a profoundly literary exercise, as the ethnography has come to be treated in very much the same fashion as the autobiography or the act of fiction. In an important article, Don Handelman (1994) writes of the project of postmodern anthropologists who seek to deconstruct ethnographic texts through the use of the textual-analytic practices of cultural and literary studies, in the interests of undoing and revealing anthropology's colonialist heritage, yet also acknowledging that the discipline is different from the other human sciences, not text-based at the first stage of evidence and material-gathering. Fieldwork anthropology also attempts to transgress the limits of alterity, yet always places the researcher at the centre of the act of recording, for the subjects under study only remain a presence in the text because the ethnographer intends them to be there. These deconstructionist practices have become a site of major focus in anthropological research of the last twenty years, as writers such as Clifford Geertz, James Clifford and Johannes Fabian revisit "classic" ethnographic texts such as Malinowski's in the attempt to better understand the representation and construction of the 'other' through the scientific practices of an established discipline. The ethnographer always writes from outside the position of the native, enacting a relationship that is informed by the empiricism of western science and the hegemony of the participant-observer relationship. Eslanda Robeson spends most of her social time in Central Africa with the Baganda aristocracy (there is the example of her visit to the chief justice of the people who has a high status in the society [104]), and given her status as civilised black subject, she finds her time concentrated in the world of men who view her as the emissary of her husband, and African women themselves find it difficult to identify with her due to her status (see Figure 21). Yet, while there are several limits placed upon the

ethnographer in both instances, their role is still important in conveying the substance of colonised cultures to the rest of the world; in Malinowski's case, the academic establishment; and in Robeson's, the American public.

There is a crucial moment in *African Journey* where we come to observe the very self-conscious operations of the ethnographic eye in visual form. At the centre of the text are to be found a multitude of photographs taken by Eslanda Robeson of several Central African cultures and the Sotho in Southern Africa. She chooses to ignore the South African context, probably given the more developed condition of the country. In some ways it appears that Robeson is intent on capturing the fabric of an untouched Africa, and the photographs at the centre of her book come to constitute a kind of mobile portmanteau for the array of visual objects that she acquires throughout her time of the 'native' cultures of anthropological interest in Africa. Much could be written of the focalisation of these images, and how they are mediated through the perspective of the ethnographer, and not in any way a representation of the culture being observed from the point of view of that culture. Eslanda's intent was to preserve the substance of several 'vanishing' cultures severally close to the interests and threat of British colonialism and modernity. The purpose of this photographic cataloguing might be called "salvage ethnography," the recording of film footage about almost any aspect of the way of life of the remaining tribal peoples, or other peoples whose stable cultural patterns were disappearing" (Rollwagen 1988:xiii). This "urge to capture on film the nature of rapidly vanishing cultures" (Barnouw 1983:45) clearly motivated both Robeson and Ralph Bunche (Potamianos 1983), an African-American colleague of Robeson's (professor of Political Science at Howard University) who travelled in South Africa around the same time. Bunche would go on to become a major international figure, eventually winning the Nobel Peace Prize for his mediatory activities in the Middle East. Both scholars were concerned with this imperative and would in some fashion have been influenced by the writings of Edward Wilmot Blyden, but I shall return to this matter later in the chapter.

The most telling image in the series (see Figure 20) is of Robeson's son, Pauli, standing next to a group of pygmy elders from the village of Ngite near the village of Mbeni in the Congo. We find in the text several images of the village itself, which do much to convey the focalising eye and interest of

Eslanda Robeson as an anthropologist. There is a fascinating contrast in the image between Pauli, who is dressed in European clothing with jacket and wearing the kind of white hat that Livingstone would have worn in the interior of Africa. Pauli stands next to this group of elders and the juxtaposition, the disjunction between them is immediately perceivable. This difference of position and self-representation speaks to the very nature of the African-American traveller's experience in Africa, of the double consciousness at the centre of their identity, and the feeling of dislocation in this seemingly 'savage' space. The African-American subject is far too subsumed under the coloniser's identity to ever be able to reach towards some ideational, pure form of 'Africanness' that has not been tainted by the contact with colonialism and the culture of the master, yet there is always a misplaced, an impossibly-achievable desire to return to that idealised version of African identity that is the desire of most African-American travelling subjects in Africa. For Melville Herskovits, "film was an illustration, not an integral part of research to be used and cited in publication" (De Brigard 1975:46). Unlike Herskovits, Ralph Bunche valued both the visual and the textual-ethnographic record, and took many photographs during his journey. The informality, as it is stylistically expressed by Eslanda Robeson, of *African Journey* allows for the practice and presence of a text that is able to meld together seemingly contradictory elements: that of diary of private experience and public statement on the colonised black subject; journal of the process of anthropological research; social account of the aristocracy of Central Africa; visual record of the 'native' cultures of the continent; and, if taken together and more importantly, a record of the multiple experiences of the travelling African-American subject on the continent of 'home' and relational space.

"An anthropologist must understand the potential of the camera as a recording device, and he must have a clear understanding of why he is carrying all the extra weight into the field. [...] The camera has position in both time and space, and therefore imposes a perspective on any action" (Asch, Marshall & Spier 1973:179). Certainly, the position of Eslanda Robeson as student in anthropology complicates matters, and the image of her son and pygmy elders in the Eastern Congo, remains the most remarkable in the book, yet we must also consider its visual composition and the eye of the ethnographer for the implications of this are important for the progression

of this reading of the text. In his essay, "On Ethnographic Authority," James Clifford (1983) begins by writing of an image from Malinowski's study of the Trobrianders.

The frontispiece from *Argonauts*, like all photographs, asserts presence, that of the scene before the lens. But it suggests also another presence—the ethnographer actively composing this fragment of Trobriand reality. Kula exchange, the subject of Malinowski's book, has been made perfectly visible, centred in the perceptual frame. And a participant's glance redirects our attention to the observational standpoint we share, as readers, with the ethnographer and his camera. The predominant mode of modern fieldwork authority is signalled: "You are there because I was there." (Clifford 1983:118)

Bunche borrowed a film camera from Eslanda during his second journey to Africa between 1936 and 1938, and as she wrote to Bunche in a letter just before his leaving for Africa: "Take it to Kodak House and they will show you how to use it, will sell you the films, [and] when you return—or anywhere at a Kodak House – they will develop them for you without charge" (in Potamianos 1996:445). Addressing the letter, "My Dear Ralph," it is clear that the two were friends, and this fact establishes a sense of connection between African-American travellers. This was the same camera that Eslanda had used to record her own experiences during her *African Journey*. It was during her time in Africa that she learnt the rules of discretion in the use of the camera, a process somewhat similar to Malinowski's own first encounter with the Trobrianders, attempting to establish for himself a sense of the conventions to follow when making enquiries into and recording the substance of the 'native' culture. As Eslanda writes, "I never bring it [the camera] out unless I am sure no one will mind" (96) and she notes later on the need for moderation in certain instances: "[The wife of a Buganda prince] showed me around the courtyards and graciously allowed me to take pictures. I wouldn't have dared to ask, but Nyabongo [the prince] joined us and suggested I use my camera, and that was all I needed" (93).

* * *

From the opening pages of *African Journey*, Eslanda Robeson situates herself as an African-American woman within the historical moment of the social and political landscape of the America of 1945. She is writing from this context because she and Paul had returned to the country on the eve of the Second World War for reasons of safety and stability. While London represented a far more socially accepting and culturally diverse space than the United States, the threat of Nazism and its racist intensities would have been far too menacing. Eslanda's reflections at the beginning of *African Journey* form a prelude to the account of her time in Africa and are written, as I have noted, ten years after the fact. She expresses her sense of the history of slavery that binds the peoples of the African diaspora, yet reaches beyond this historical fact to propose an even more inclusive notion of the connectedness between colonised peoples under their common experience of subjection to Euro-American imperialism. As she writes, "I came to realize that the Negro problem was not even limited to the problem of the 173 million black people in Africa, America, and the West Indies, but actually included (and does now especially include) the problem of the 390 million Indians in India, the problem of the 450 million Chinese in China, as well as the problem of all minorities everywhere" (10). Eslanda went on to publish two articles in the journal, *Asia and the Americas*. In "A Negro Looks at Africa," she gestures towards some of the central themes in *African Journey*; that African-Americans should take pride in the accomplishments of Africans. She draws on the writings of anti-racist anthropologists like Franz Boas; she describes among other things the early African smelting of iron, the long-established systems of law among the Ashanti and the Hausa, and the domestication of cattle, as examples of the African subject's cultural and technological achievements; of the capacity for civilisation. She also notes the influence of African art on modernist painting and sculpture in Europe (Shaffer 1999a:52). Glicksberg (1947:329) observes that in this tendency there is an "overvaluation of Africa" and that in this "primitive art has of late exerted a potent influence on the mind of the West." I agree with Glicksberg when he suggests that African art should be treated as an independent entity with its own aesthetic values,

yet I find in his position, as I have noted before, a rather essentialising discourse that denies the possibility of cultural hybridity. Certainly, Eslanda imagined this hybridity as a consequence of diasporic movements and the colonial enterprise, and she even suggests that the traditional communal ownership of land in Africa could be applied to contemporary Western society (Shaffer 1999:52).

The trauma of slavery and the violence of the colonial encounter, both immediate and in its long-term effects on the fabric of a plethora of African societies, explain this position. It is important to establish a sense of the cultural and historical legacy of Pan-Africanist thought and the influence it would have had on black travellers such as Eslanda Robeson. While this chapter, part of a study on diasporic travel writing between South Africa and the United States, concerns itself with Eslanda's time spent in South Africa, it is necessary to consider what her central concerns are in the text. She was attempting to establish the distinct contribution that Africa has to make to humanity. As I have noted, Eslanda, through cataloguing and photographing the material world of Central and Southern African societies, sets out to acquire a record and an archive of the substance of that distinct endowment of cultural knowledge that was disappearing from the fabric of traditional societies (the 'salvage ethnography', that was Ralph Bunche's purpose as well, particularly in East Africa).

Eslanda's crossing of the Atlantic also entailed a passing of Liberia on the West African coast where she reflects on the historical importance of the country in African-American history and its failure as a site of liberation:

June 7. Sunday. Off Liberia, west coast. Liberia! That high hope which turned out to be such a disappointment. Liberia was to be the country where freed Negroes were to be really free, and were to help develop and educate their African brothers. And what happened? In time the freed Negroes (Americo-Liberians as they are called) followed the pattern of other colonised peoples - exploiting and enslaving the Africans, the Liberians. Considering the high purpose for which this black colony was founded, and the brave democratic

principles upon which this so-called republic is supposed to rest, the backwardness, poverty, and lack of franchise among the subject Liberian people as against the wealth and official corruption among the ruling Americo-Liberians citizens makes a shameful picture – a disgrace to the ‘Republic’ and the United States that sponsors it. (25)

Eslanda’s thoughts on the Liberian matter indicate something of the complexities and impossibilities of the African-American’s ‘returning home’ and ability to re-engage local black Africans and the dream of a romanticised past; her location to that space arousing the emotive reflection on and feeling of that history. The implication is that any intervention, tied as it is in this case, to the colonial enterprise, will be flawed. The ‘returning’ African-Americans themselves, born into post-Civil War American colonial society, would have seen themselves as superior to their African brothers, and Eslanda suggests something of this condescending tone in her references to the development of African peoples. This is consistent with the attitude of the time, and the civilising discourse was also the ideological purpose behind the work of the AME Church. However, it would be reductive to describe Eslanda’s relationship with Africa in such terms. Hers was a more complex association, inflected with a desire to understand and reconstruct the continent and its peoples in anthropological terms and through the workings of the ethnographic imagination. Her identification with Africa remains a fraught issue, for despite her intense desire to claim an African selfhood, she is never able to bridge the transatlantic gap of temporality and cultural difference that was constitutive of her identity. As she writes of her claims for ‘blackness’: “[...] Me, I *am* Negro, I *know* what we think, how we feel. I know this means that, and that means so-and-so” (11; author’s emphasis). She is labelled as “European” by white people in London and her response to this is an expression of anger and dismay:

‘What do you mean I’m European? I’m *Negro*. I’m African myself. I’m what you call primitive. I have studied my mind, our minds. How dare you call me European!’

‘No, you’re not primitive, my dear,’ they told me pa-

tiently and tolerantly, 'you're educated and cultured, like us.'
(11; author's emphasis)

In an essay entitled "Negro Americans and the African Dream" (1947) Charles Glicksberg argues for the impossibility of the return 'home' for the black American subject. He refers specifically to Eslanda's case as it is accounted in *African Journey* and suggests that their "roots are deep" (1947:323) in the United States and that they have no connection to Africa, apart from an emotional one rooted embedded in their desire for a sense of heritage: "The only culture the American Negroes know is that of the United States" (1947:324). Eslanda bases her connection to Africa not simply on a shared racial identity but also in the interests of the wider anti-colonial cause and the desire to reconnect with the memory of her past, which is something common to humanity. As Glicksberg (1947:328) continues: "The motives that led Mrs. Robeson to undertake the journey and write her book bear directly on the Negro problem in the United States. Her writing expresses the Negro's longing for an ancestral homeland, an African Zion, for a tradition, a noble past which can be turned into a glorious future." This speaks to a condition of anxiety: she is unable to ever transgress the limits of difference despite her innate desire to do so. She affirms this instability in her writing of Africa through the discourses of anthropology. "The search for racial origins was a search for integrity, an experiment in achieving the integrity of the alienated self" (1947:329). What Glicksberg does agree, however, is that Eslanda's stress on the ability of the African to achieve civilisation and education is an important one, and the most vital reason for her presence in Africa. It is this sense of the "alienated self" though, that speaks to the complexities of her role as a traveller and diarist, where her ethnographic imaginings are influenced by the subjective location of her self and the strain of writing a place for oneself in the world from an alienated position.

* * *

Eslanda Robeson's continental crossing fulfilled a very distinct anti-colonial ideological purpose and it is in her interactions with and reactions to white colonials that we see this. I shall now turn to two such instances (an en-

counter of a female and then a male figure), one in transit to, and the other in transit from, Africa. Firstly on June 6, 1936 on board the SS *Winchester Castle*, travelling from Southampton to Cape Town, Eslanda encounters an Afrikaner woman, Mrs. G, who is “very big, rough, and kindly” (22):

We have been gradually getting acquainted with our ship-mates. Last night Mrs. G., the South African lady of about seventy, very big, rough, and kindly, who sits at the next table in the dining salon, got talking to us about Cecil Rhodes. She continued the conversation later on deck, long after Pauli went to bed. Her late husband knew Rhodes well, they were great friends and often went on long trips together. A few months ago she climbed up to Rhodes grave where he lies beside Jameson, and looked over the Matoppos (sic). She said it is a beautiful and lonely sight – vast – and one has to sit and contemplate the frailty of man and the magnificence of the universe. She said she went on from there to Victoria Falls, which have quite another kind of magnificence.

Mrs. G. has been through the Boer War, the Jameson Raid, and the First World War. She had been in Europe during the latter because her sons were fighting, and she wanted to be near them. She was born in the Orange Free State. Paul Kruger lived in the same village. She does not admire Kruger, says he was crude and uneducated. Smuts used to play in her garden with her brother, and she has known him all her life. I must cultivate this woman. She is part of South African history. (22)

One remains rather sceptical of the veracity of Mrs. G’s fabulous claims. Given Eslanda’s location as curious, black American outsider, Mrs. G is able to stretch the truth of the facts of her life, perhaps in an attempt to impress her guest. Given the historical and social location of both subjects, this is a complex moment of exchange, for both come from very different experiences of modernity, bound to the conditions of racial identity and the transnational flows of colonial modernity that would have negotiated very different place

for them in the world. Mrs. G treats Eslanda as an *equal*, probably given Paul's fame, and Eslanda's own appearance as the cultured black American woman (see Figure 19). As the shipboard experience for the black South African and African-American traveller reveals itself as a common trope in this study, this further complicates our reading of Eslanda's description of the interaction between these women. For Eslanda, Mrs G. becomes the first source of direct engagement with South African 'history' as a narrative and a source of fascination. We cannot entirely reject Mrs. G's experiences of the country and she certainly provides Eslanda one of the few generally positive experiences of the white Colonial. Later on, Eslanda outlines Mrs. G's account of her son and his wife who maintain a cattle farm in the then Belgian Congo, over four hundred square miles in area and with "fourteen rivers on it" (23). Much is made of Mrs. G's description of her arduous, heroic journey from the present-day Zimbabwe to the Congolese interior: the delight of the colonial spectacle of the land of the 'native' becomes something that Eslanda shares in:

She went from Southern Rhodesia up to Elizabethville and right on up to Bukama in the Congo; thence by drazoon (little railroad workers' carriage on wheels, worked by hand) the rest of the way through the leopard forest to the farm. She said the forest was very frightening, with the great brutes lying up in the branches of the tree, quiet and deadly. The drazoon was open, but went by so swiftly and unexpectedly and with such strange noise that the beasts seemed unprepared to spring. Of course she and the men were well armed. (23)

This is one of the most telling moments in the interface between Eslanda and Mrs. G. Mrs. G represents herself as the brave, forthright woman, able to negotiate the challenges of the savage interior which, in Mrs. G's words, is "black with Natives" (24). She imagines the most unbelievable tales of epic proportions, of the savage wilds, of her crossing of the Zambezi River on a "Native-built raft" with a hundred attendants and the hungered attentions of several crocodiles" (25). These inclusions are made by Eslanda in one sense, I think, to parody the very nature of their hyperbolic content. At

some level Eslanda is fascinated by these exotic stories but is still critical of Mrs. G's descriptions of her black servants whom, in the case of Julius, one of her charges, she calls a "Native" and a "boy" (28). Eslanda reveals an interesting contrast here: "I could almost feel I was at home again, listening to a white Southerner from our own Deep South. I think it will be easy for me to understand the South Africans. Their attitudes, especially their patriarchal attitudes, will be easy to understand" (28). It is from this first encounter that Eslanda's feelings and suspicions of white South Africans are confirmed, and the parallels to the South in the United States are unsurprising. As she later writes:

[African people] are as remote and isolated as possible from the cities and towns, with their European populations.

But in Africa, as in America, the white folks want the Negroes to work for them. While they proclaim a fear and horror of Negroes in general living near by, they seem quite comfortable when the *Negroes who work for them* live within call - or indeed live right in their homes. (38; author's emphasis)

These spatial dynamics, between whites and their black servants, are the legacy of apartheid and earlier colonial rule in South Africa, and we sense this ambiguity, this hypocrisy, in the condescending relationship of Mrs G towards her servants, though very clearly, in this case, she considers Eslanda to be an equal because of the reputation of Paul. This fact speaks to the complexity of Eslanda's relationship and connection to black Africans, and her similarity to the white colonials in dress and education that she so derides in the diary. She goes on to develop this understanding of the similarities between the South in the United States and the Union of South Africa at the time:

I find myself recognising the tone of voice, the inflection of these South Africans. 'Native' is their word for our 'nigger'; non-European for our 'Negro'; 'European' means white; and 'South African' surprisingly enough does not mean the mil-

lions of original black people there, but the white residents born there, as distinguished from the white residents born in Europe who are called 'colonials' or 'settlers.' (29)

On June 17, 1936, Eslanda encounters Mrs G again after their arrival in East London by ship, and Mrs G's stories have had an effect on Eslanda's son, Pauli, who has an amusing response to them:

Pauli finally heard the story behind Mrs. G's limp today. She is quite lame, and Pauli has been imagining all kinds of fantastic reasons for the deformity, to fit her romantic background. She disillusioned him, however: It seems she was walking along the street in East London and accidentally put her foot in an open sewer hole, fell, and broke her hip. 'At my age,' she said in disgust, 'after all I've been through, to break my leg in a sewer.' (41-42)

This "fascinating" (22) woman is not simply rejected by Eslanda as another racist colonial. The skill of Eslanda's descriptions of her indicates that of the work of the imagination, and in this instance written from the location of the observer, the ethnographer, able to engage, at empathic level, with the subject being described. She is able to appreciate the motives behind the romanticised nature of Mrs G's stories, of a woman who at the age of seventy is trying to capture the excitement of her youth, though limited by the afflictions that age brings. Eslanda is able to transgress the boundaries of the 'other,' to negotiate a connection and appreciation of this 'colonial' woman's life, while remaining conscious of her privileged position as a white South African. The nature of Eslanda's narrative is to capture, through the workings of the imagination, as intense and observant a rendering of social reality as is possible in the moment of experience, or subsequent to it.

Eslanda's social interactions and experiences on board ship are not limited to white colonials, despite the fact that she and her son are travelling first class ("[O]ur double first-class stateroom with private bath is pleasant and comfortable. The food and service are excellent, so it looks like a good trip." [19]) and are 'estranged' from the poorer passengers with whom she

is most desirous to connect and whose experience she wants to appreciate. She also converses with an African nursemaid from St Helena on board who describes the “brutality of the Boers” and suggests it is “impossible to believe that human beings could be so savage, so barbarous. She hates and fears them” (42). At this point we observe the white subject as ‘other’ which reveals something of Eslanda’s complex understanding of the racial dynamics of colonial Africa. She imbues the characters of her narrative, both black and white, with human qualities, which indicates her desire to be impartial in the representation of her *African Journey*, though she is always influenced by her position as travelling African-American woman. This is revealed in subsequent encounters with the white colonial.

Similarly, on leaving Africa on a plane to Europe on August 21, 1936, Eslanda recounts a conversation with a haughty European “Colonial [...] on the elderly side, red faced, choleric, and given to asserting himself” (182). He had acquired his wealth in South Africa, and though admiring of Pauli’s intelligence for his youthful age, pities him for his racial identity and the “handicap” that it represents (182). Eslanda’s response is to express pride for her son’s identity and history: “He’ll go far *because* he’s black. [...] His colour, his background, his rich history are part of his wealth. We consider it an asset, not a handicap” (182). In line with the purpose and intentions of her voyage, Eslanda prizes the importance of heritage and ancestry as a part of black identity in the formation of her son’s sense of self. She is at pains here to express her sense of black pride yet is also conscious of the limits of the choleric Colonial’s ideological position. She continues this part of the conversation in her mind, and I include it here in its full extent given the complexities of political position that Robeson is attempting to negotiate through the critique of the ‘other.’ The description of this incident is obviously written after the fact and it reveals the subjective position of the emotive observer:

This poor man doesn’t know what it’s all about. He has no important or useful knowledge about more than a billion of his fellow men—Negroes, Africans, Indians, Chinese, probably Jews, and probably Russians. Most likely he has simply dismissed them contemptuously as ‘primitive,’ ‘Oriental,’ or

'Red.' He has built himself into a very small, very limited world of his own, behind a towering, formidable wall of ignorance, prejudice and 'superiority.'

This typical Colonial seems to me weak, uncomfortably self-conscious, lonely, pathetic, and frightened.

Certainly he is weak, else why must he carry and maintain armed force—and plenty of it—everywhere he goes, always?

Certainly he is uncomfortably self-conscious, else why need he insist—loudly, constantly – that he is superior? Really superior people take their superiority for granted.

Certainly he is lonely and pathetic. Has he not arbitrarily walled himself off from more than two-thirds of his fellow men, the non-white peoples of the world?

And certainly he is frightened. One has only to watch him when he rants about the 'rising tide of colour,' about the 'yellow peril,' etc., to realize he is frightened. Only fear can explain much of his irrational behaviour toward his non-white brother. (183)

The male Colonial figure is constructed as the archetype of prejudice, and her writing here constitutes an act of autobiographic/narrative resistance. She employs several rhetorical questions, almost poetic in the tone of their orature, to reinforce her position and sense of the Negro subject as outside the influence of such reductive influences as the self-certainty of the stability and interiority of cultural certainty that is to be found in the self-alienated position of the Colonial figure. He is a product of his own socio-historical condition as a subject and agent of British imperialism. I sense that Eslanda is somewhat hyperbolic in her suggestion of the Colonial subject's sense of self-alienation and displacedness in the world; this is meant to suit her ideological position as a travelling black subject and affirms her sense of identity as an African-American woman attempting to realise a place for non-white peoples in a colonially-dominated world. She represents the Colonial as subjugated to his neuroses of self-certainty and male assertion of power, yet I suspect that she does this to reinforce her own sense of place as an African-

American woman, out to strengthen the purposes of her own ideological purposes as narrator of a mid-twentieth century *African Journey*.

Eslanda's answer to the ideologically- and psychically-limited position of the Colonial" is to highlight the almost messianic position of the non-white subject, suffering under the global racism: "We know our white brothers [...] We have not built any walls to limit our world. Walls have been built against us, but we are always fighting to tear them down, and in the fighting, we grow, we find new strength, new scope" (183). There is something resounding about Eslanda Robeson's political *message*, far more complex than the reductive militancy of other anti-colonial projects that sought a violent change to the international political system. She uses her *African Journey* as a means to negotiate the several political, social and historical experiences of subjugation to empire and white authority that encompass her experience of the world, while ever conscious of the rationality of the brotherhood of humanity. It is clear that Robeson's is a text more than simply an ethnography of the account of her travel experiences in Africa, yet is also punctuated by the inflections of her position and social conscience as an African-American woman. Through adversity, according to Robeson, the Negro subject grows stronger, toughened by the onslaught of racism, never enervated by it, and has "survived and grown strong" (184). At the time of Eslanda's journey to South Africa, and as I have noted, local authorities possessed a great suspicion for visiting African-Americans, due to the belief that they might incite rebellion given the apparent level of 'civilisation' that they had attained in the United States. This was clear in the nature and progression of Paul Robeson's ascendancy as a performer in Europe and the Americas, given that his career at times seems a self-conscious response to the centres of white culture and identity. This tendency is indicated in the autobiographies of Booker T Washington and WEB Du Bois, where the complexities of the state of double consciousness are addressed directly.

* * *

While on board ship, travelling across the Atlantic to Southern Africa, Pauli and Eslanda encounter the prejudices of white South Africans: "The passengers seem friendly enough, but I am taking no chances. They are mostly

South Africans, whose attitude toward the Negro I find very familiar, very like that of our 'Deep South' Southern white folks in America, only more so. So I will be extremely cautious socially" (13). She approaches such colonials with a degree of suspicion that I have already mentioned. She also makes an interesting point regarding the difference between British people of the colonial centre of London and those from the peripheral spaces of the empire. She suggests that they are almost provincial in outlook, backward in thought and lacking in sophistication. There is a kind of lag between the changing political climate and attitudes of London, and the nature of the relations between the white colonials and black people in South Africa. Someone like Eslanda does not fit well in the race thinking of white South Africans, and her status as an aberration is indicated in their attitude towards her. She is at once reviled by some, and an object of fascination for others. As she continues:

The South Africans are becoming more and more excited as we near Capetown. Everyone tells us proudly about the beauty of Table Bay and Table Mountain. When clouds obscure the perfectly flat top of the mountain they say, 'There is a tablecloth on the mountain.'

We have been getting cheerful and loving cables from Paul regularly all during the voyage. Today he cabled that Dr. Schapera, head of anthropology at Capetown University, whom we met in London at Malinowski's, will call for us when we reach Capetown. That is good news. Paul must have been very busy on the home front about that visa.

June 15. We anchored in Table Bay at three o'clock this morning. I could see the lights of Capetown just ahead. We docked at seven. It was pouring with rain, a heavy misty driving rain, and there were so many tablecloths on Table Mountain we couldn't see it all. (30)

She describes Cape Town as a "beautiful city, spacious and modern. The harbour and mountains make a perfect setting" (32). Apart from be-

ing met by Schapera, Eslanda and her son must face the curious gaze of the white media who are waiting for her expectantly as soon as she disembarks from the boat. Later, she would publish an article in the local women's housekeeping magazine, *The Outspan*, entitled "My Husband is the Most Modest of Men." In it she writes, for instance: "I am shamelessly proud of my husband. Apart from his voice and his acting ability, which have brought him fame, he is one of the most brilliant minds I have ever met. He is beautiful, too, in a Negro way, with his magnificent build and colossal strength—he is over six feet in height and over 200 pounds—and has (sic) perfect Negroid features and colouring" (1936a:83). It is interesting to observe the way in which Eslanda emphasises the beauty of the black male body in her praise for her husband. She is obviously meant as a kind of affirmation of black identity in the face of the white colonial gaze. Eslanda's "persistence and brinkmanship" (Musser 2006:428) were important in ensuring her success in her African venture. She was amused by all of the public attention and used this for her benefit. Her stated aim was the anthropological fieldwork that she was going to conduct in Uganda, but her intended aim was to observe the conditions under which black South Africans lived, "to serve as the couple's eyes and ears" (Musser 2006:428) because Paul would have found it difficult to enter South Africa.

As she continues: "Newspapermen searched me out and interviewed from eight to nine o'clock. Newspapermen are the same the world over. They can ask some very ticklish questions and corner you into making rash statements, if you are not very careful. Fortunately fifteen years with Paul have given me some experience and caution. (30). She proceeds to set out some of the questions asked by the reporters and her responses to them. It is important that we treat Eslanda's voice as distinct from that of her husband. I propose that, while relying on his reputation to further her public profile and ensuring the success of her journey through Africa, in the case of South Africa, she employs the practices of ethnography that she has acquired through her training in London to reveal much about the nature of South African society. She provokes responses from white colonials, but never enough to arouse any suspicions regarding her intentions.

Reporters: Has Mr. Robeson expressed his views about segrega-

tion and discrimination in South Africa?

Me: He has expressed his views on segregation and discrimination in general, everywhere. I don't think we know enough about the specific problems in South Africa to express an intelligent view about them. (In my mind: I hope to find out as much as possible about them while I am here, so we will be able to express a view about them in the future.)

[...]

Reporters: How much European blood have you?

Me: (Mischievously, but truthfully) Some Spanish, English, Scottish, Jewish, American Indian, with a large majority of Negro blood. I consider myself Negro, and have always been considered Negro by white Americans. (31)

It is wonderful to observe the delight that Eslanda takes in setting out her complex, hybrid identity. In South African terms, she would be coloured, but she affirms her blackness here, and her position would have been uncomfortable for white South African society. While an object of fascination for the white gaze, she must also establish a place for herself outside of the reputation and influence of her husband. Her meeting with Isaac Schapera establishes an important intellectual connection between American and South African anthropologists. Schapera, and a Mr Goodwin, head of archaeology at the University of Cape Town, collected them from the docks. This is the first point at which Eslanda and her son encounter African material culture in the anthropological space for the first time:

At the university we first went through the museum. Saw the very interesting Bushman Collection: life-sized figures of Bushmen, some originals of their rock-paintings and chip-pings (an especially marvellous one of an elephant). The curator gave Pauli some Bushman beads made of ostrich eggshells, and me some fine photographs of the rock-carvings and paintings. Dr. Schapera gave me some African divining bones – a set of four, made of wood. We are already accumu-

lating things. (32)

Schapera shared Eslanda's anti-segregationist position in regard to South Africa: "It is no longer possible for the two races to develop apart from each other. The future welfare of the country now depends upon the finding of some social and political system in which both may life together in close social contact" (1928:170). Yet there is one issue on which she finds no common ground and this is the matter of the dissident Tswana chief, Tshekedi Khama.

During lunch Dr. Schapera told us he was concerned in a new case against Tshekedi; that he, Tshekedi, is now questioning certain proclamations which the government has made as being contrary to Native law and custom. Schapera says it is a highly technical matter, and one of the things which seems to irritate him is the fact that Tshekedi keeps talking about the 'divine right of kings'! This tickled me because it sounds like all the other things I have read and heard about Tshekedi, this remarkable man who is so rightly a romantic hero to all Negroes who know about him. I hope to met and talk with this fascinating African regent in his native Bechuanaland. Naturally I said nothing of this ambition at lunch. Tshekedi is a pretty sore point with Europeans, I take it. (33)

Khama died in London in 1959, and for most of his lifetime he was the regent of a small tribe in Bechuanaland, the Bamangwato, and uncle to Seretse Khama. He was well known amongst colonial leaders and this was not because of any radical leanings, but rather his staunch traditionalism and desire for his people to be free from the encroachment of British colonial authority. He opposed the desire of the South African government to incorporate Bechuanaland into the Union and achieved renown among people of Eslanda's anti-colonial leanings because of his feeling that the Bamangwato were able to govern themselves without the intervention of white colonial authority (Benson 1960).

Eslanda is never able to meet Khama, and the most interesting part

of her time in South Africa takes place while she is journeying through the eastern Cape. Here, she meets black South Africans of the educated elite class, and in them, she observes equals. On June 19, 1936, she met up with John Knox Bokwe and Max Yergan, YMCA representative in South Africa, at Port Elizabeth after sailing from Cape Town. As I have mentioned before, Yergan was a friend of Paul's and Eslanda knew him through her work at the Council on African Affairs and had met him in London several years before. As she writes in response to conversation with Bokwe: "I am surprised and delighted to find these Africans far more politically aware than my fellow Negroes in America. They understand their situation and the causes of the terrible conditions under which they live, and are continually seeking—and are firmly resolved to find—a way to improve their lot" (43). Her response is a fascinating one, and she does not, as some other black American observers of the time, treat black Africans as uncivilised or objects of mere fascination. She does not interact with them as objects of scientific inquiry, but rather treats them as equals with whom she has a reciprocal relationship – in which all share their knowledge of the world. She makes the point throughout her account that kings, chiefs and other authority figures are the custodians of the history of their people and the basis of their institutions. She never draws or refers to a distinction between European colonial civilization and African savagery. They are treated as equals. As she writes, "These Africans, these 'primitives,' make me feel humble and respectful. I blush with shame for the mental picture my fellow Negroes in America have of our African brothers: wild black savages in leopard skins, waving spears and eating raw meat" (49).

Following her arrival at Port Elizabeth, Eslanda and her son leave with Bokwe and Yergan for Grahamstown and Alice (and the journey inland; see Figure 18), the latter town being the site of Fort Hare University Native College, where DDT Jabavu was teaching at the time. As she writes:

This was our first glimpse of inland South Africa: lonely hills and lovely valleys with cattle grazing in the spacious pastureland; table mountains one to two thousand feet above sea level; isolated farms surrounded by their miles and miles of land. And on the roads, Africans walking, Africans struggling

with ox carts (the usual means of transport in the immense areas where there are no railroads); an occasional car near the towns and villages; and dust. (44)

She meets ZK Matthews, an important black intellectual, political leader and who teaches anthropology at Fort Hare, and stays with Yergan and his wife, Susie. One of the more interesting moments narrated in the text is when Eslanda attends a Makiwane family wedding on June 26, 1936. Here we observe one of the clearest instances of the ethnographic imagination in operation, as Eslanda sets out her experience of a traditional Xhosa wedding. She draws a contrast between the Christian wedding that takes place first in Grahamstown, and after, “all over again in Ntselemantzi, the Native location outside the town” (46). She notes some of the customs: “The bride was praised by a poet, a Native from Transkei who is a student at Lovedale. The people formed a ring around the bride and groom, who sat on a bench; the poet stood in the centre orating, praising the bride’s beauty and character. All during his reading the people commented aloud, approvingly” (46). I include the rest of the account here:

Then the newly married couple had to walk the length of the village so the groom could show his bride to his people. Girls and young women went before and behind them, “clapping the bride” first to the women, then to the men. When they arrived at the “place of the women,” all the women fanned a circle around the bride, clapping hands and dancing. Old women danced too, lightly and well. The steps were probably the foundation steps of our Charleston and shuffle, with intricate and imaginative additions. The bride then dropped money to the women and was clapped down to the men, where the same thing took place.

There was a mighty feast: A cow, sheep, goat, and even a bullock (very special) had been killed for the wedding. Frieda, Mrs. Moroka, and I peeped into the huge cooking pots—filled with meat, samp, pudding—steaming merrily over fires on the ground, and tended by the old women.

I was anxious to see as many details of this Village location as possible. Frieda took me down to the cattle kraals, usually the “men’s place.” They are quite near the huts and are large long oval spaces surrounded by shoulder-high fences made of dried branches and twigs, with no roof. The cattle are driven into these kraals at night. There were smoking fires in every kraal.

We went into some of the huts: no windows, no light at all; rough camp beds, cots, pallets on the floor. No sanitation, no water. The lucky ones have a candle or an oil lamp. There is no paving anywhere in Ntselemantzi. (47)

This moment of description can be viewed partly as ethnographic representation, but also as autobiographical account of Eslanda’s experience of the ritual. What makes this even more interesting is that the subjects under focus are not so different from educated black Americans. Their community is centred around Lovedale and Fort Hare, though the setting is rural and a very obvious distinction is drawn between Christian ritual and traditional practice. Eslanda spends a great deal of time in her diary focusing on the role of women in African society, and she finds in the company of the Yergan and Matthews families a great deal to converse about. “Frieda Matthews and Susie Yergan do social service work among the women. Bokwe is beginning his practice of medicine, following his graduation from Edinburgh. Matthews had studied anthropology at Yale and at the London School of Economics” (48). As Eslanda sets it out, the intellectual space in which these people interacted was a dynamic one, and they discussed a range of postcolonial issues, including the issue of Indian independence, and the deepening Fascist conditions in Germany and Italy. She also mentions the invasion of Ethiopia and Japan’s presence in China.

After departing the Eastern Cape, Eslanda and her son made their way to Johannesburg, leaving on 2 July 1936 in the company of Dr AB Xuma, the important ANC leader who has been mentioned many times in this study already. Calling Max Yergan her “guardian angel” (72) and expressing her thanks to Dr Moroka, she travels with Xuma through the Free State by car. They pass through the “very ‘cracker’ Boer town” (72) of Kroonstad,

where she is treated with disdain by a “ratty-faced clerk” (79) at the local post office who is suspicious of her intentions; she was enquiring after a telegram that her husband had sent from London. She must have been a rather unsettling presence for the white Afrikaner inhabitants who had their obvious preconceptions about how a black person should behave.

Eslanda’s time in Johannesburg and the account of it is of interest because of the way it parallels Ethelreda Lewis’s perceptions of the city in *Wild Deer*, and because of the telling social conditions for black South Africans that she gives full coverage to. While she accurately describes the conditions for black mineworkers in Johannesburg, she also relies throughout on already-published statistics and the print media. The road journey through South Africa evokes feelings of similar experiences that she has had in the United States. “This travelling about Africa reminds me of travelling through the Deep South in America: You are passed from friend to friend, from car to car, from home to home, often covering thousands of miles without enduring the inconveniences and humiliations of the incredibly bad Jim Crow train accommodations and lack of hotel facilities for Negroes” (72). This is particularly revealing of the similarity of both countries and the repressive conditions for black people generally. It is an important statement of mutuality and a juncture at which the state of ‘writing between’ allows for a transcendence of the limits of difference in the face of transnational black intercultural dialogue.

Eslanda writes vividly: “I shall always remember the dust of South Africa – mists of it, fogs of it, clouds of it – floods of thick red-brown and clay-coloured dust swirling everywhere the moment you move your foot or your car” (72-73). Thus, as I have noted throughout this chapter, *African Journey* ranges in its focus from a concern with the account of travel, the subject’s musings on her transatlantic identity, the work of ethnography and the process of research, and the more emotive and sensual moments of description. At one point, for instance, Eslanda expressively loses herself in the intensity and surrealistic quality of the African landscape: “The gorgeous incredible sunsets, so spectacular that I always think of a cyclorama at the back of a theatre: brilliant gay scarlet, flame, liquid gold skies turning to dull gold, then fading to pastel pinks and blues, blues and greys, then luminous blue-grey, then the swift darkness. No twilight. Just that clarity of light, silhouette,

and the sudden night” (74).

As the party enter Johannesburg’s outskirts Eslanda sees the “tragic burden of Africans who have served their term in the mines” (74). Again, this is consistent with Lewis’s emphasis on the social destructiveness of the mines and the exploitation of cheap black labour. Eslanda sees the city as “attractive, modern, clean, and spacious by daylight” (81), especially in the “beautiful European suburbs” (81), but the ever-looming mine dumps on the periphery of the city are “[g]reat depressing mountains of slag –whitish looking ashy dirt and clinkers washed clean of all gold dust, and just piled up and left” (81). The ever-present metaphor of detritus and decay accents this representation of Johannesburg. She takes note of the police patrols that round of those not in possession of a pass or have to pay a fine etc. Her observations are interspersed with references to law, which are then related to the plight of the black poor she sees on the roads.

Eslanda then launches into a discussion of white colonial exploitation of Africa and its people, with a focus on the Belgian Congo. Digressions such as this are typical of her writing style, this obviously being due to the diaristic style of the work. She arrived at the important black township of Sophiatown on 3 July and she and her son stayed with Xuma and his family. The township, of course, is an iconic one in South African history, important for its African jazz culture and as a site of resistance to the white regime. Eslanda displays throughout her account a distinct awareness of cultural difference, informed by the practice of her ethnographic sensibilities. On Sunday, 4 July, she writes:

In the early afternoon we drove through Friedasdoorp [Vrededorp], said to be the roughest section around Johannesburg. It reminded me very much of Lenox Avenue in Harlem on a summer Sunday afternoon. The streets were thronged with Africans, all colours, all sizes, dressed in all kinds of clothes, strolling in the sun. Indians, Malays, Coloured, and Africans live in this section. (82)

As we have seen, Eslanda constantly draws parallels between her American and South African experiences. Like Lewis, she is aware of the multicultural

nature of Johannesburg and the nature of pre-apartheid racial segregation in its unlegislated forms. She is aware of the boundaries established between white and non-white people, and in this fashion possesses the liminal quality that I have argued for throughout this thesis. That is why white South Africans treat her with suspicion and fascination. She is able to skillfully employ her location between cultures to undertake a revealing analysis of the social conditions in the country. In other words, she has access to people across the race groups, and consciously identifies with the African elite, as in her hosting by Dr Xuma.

For Lewis the horror of Johannesburg is the horror of the mines. Eslanda visits a mine on 4 July and makes some acute observations about the conditions. There is no white superintendent there because it is a Sunday, and she is taken around by a black one.

[T]he Induna or Native superintendent showed us around. There are 5,400 Natives working in the mine, and more than 2,000 additional Natives working in the next mine about a thousand yards away: Swazis, Pondos, Basutos, and many Portuguese East Africans. Pauli and I were soon able to distinguish the Swazis, who wear their hair long, dressed with red-brown clay and brushed right back from their dark faces, giving them a curious red-haired look. And the Pondos, with their hair in regular “corn-rows,” sometimes “wrapped” – a style which Negroes in our own Deep South would recognize immediately. Of course we could tell the Basutos by their typical colourful blankets. (83)

She focuses on the poor working conditions of the black miners and throughout the passage indicates an awareness of the differences between African tribal groups indicated through their dress and outward appearance. The miners are required to live in a compound, a “barren dusty square surrounded by brick barracks, ‘rooms,’ and the whole enclosed by a high strong fence; very like a prison. The barracks, or rooms, are high one-story buildings, with a door but no windows. The light and air come through ventilators placed high in the walls, just under the metal roofs” (84). As I have suggested, the

prolixity of detail in her description could be connected to the observational skills that she has acquired as an ethnographer-in-training. She outlines the poor wages that the black miners receive, the dangerous, severe conditions under which they labour, and the long hours they must work. Also, respiratory illness is one of the consequences of the poorly ventilated and dust-ridden environment in which the black miners work. Eslanda makes the important observation (and one which Lewis makes herself in *Wild Deer*) that South Africa's wealth derives from the mines and the cheap labour provided by the black miners.

On July 5, 1936, Eslanda attended a party with Dr Xuma at the Bantu Men's Social Club that was given in her honour. She makes the revealing point that its members are from the black elite class and very different from the African proletariat: "The Africans making up the membership of this club are quite European" (87). We have observed this 'European' quality in the identity of DDT Jabavu and the elite intellectual class to which he belongs in the Eastern Cape. The experience of the party is of "practical value" (87) for Eslanda as two rituals of entertainment arouse her interest: "an alliterative story made up almost entirely of clicks - very humorous and fascinating - and a song about the Johannesburg mountains, a real African ballad which was beautiful in itself and beautifully sung" (87). *African Journey* is rich with social detail and we observe how she clearly sees in leaders like Xuma, someone very similar to herself and her husband. This is an important moment of self-recognition as well, because Eslanda realises that her journey is also about establishing points of mutuality between local African people, while also maintaining the ethnographic distance that is typical of the latter part of her diary.

After leaving Johannesburg Eslanda attempts to visit Swaziland but is unsuccessful. She consigns herself to the opportunity of visiting Lesotho. It would be outside of the scope and concerns of this study to substantially engage with Eslanda's experiences throughout the rest of her journey in Central Africa, but there is much in her descriptions of fieldwork and travel that has been of interest to several other scholars. In this reading, I have attempted to explore some of the ways in which autobiographical self-fashioning and ethnographic representation are employed simultaneously to produce a new form of text that richly explores the complex relationship of the

African-American traveller to the people of the African continent.

* * *

Notes

1. I shall, for the purposes of uniformity in this chapter, refer to the writer of *African Journey* as “Eslanda” throughout, which aids in the reader’s easier differentiation of her better-known husband.
2. Within this chapter, references without dates are to the 1946 edition of *African Journey*.
3. In 1953, on Stalin’s birthday, Paul would express his admiration for the anticolonial policies of the Soviet Union:

I was later to travel, to see with my own eyes what could happen to so-called backward peoples. In the West (in England, in Belgium, France, Portugal, Holland) – the Africans, the Indians (East and West), many of the Asian peoples were considered so backward that centuries, perhaps, would have to pass before these so-called ‘colonials’ could become a part of modern society. [...] But in the Soviet Union, Yakuts, Nenetses, Kirgiz, Tadzhiks – had respect and were helped to advance with unbelievable rapidity in this socialist land. No empty promises, such as colored folk continuously hear in the United States, but deeds. (Foner 1982:347-349)

Clearly, Paul was keenly aware of the profound differences between colonised and other oppressed peoples, an attitude that would come to form the basis of his larger sociopolitical mission. He lauded the possibilities for civil freedom that Soviet communism seem to provide, yet was tragically unaware of the repressive society that it would come to constitute.

4. Gerald Home (2002:142-143) notes, in a biography of Shirley Graham Du Bois, WEB Du Bois’s wife:

Paul Robeson was another example of an African American who did not flee from the orbit of the Communists after 1956. He and his spouse, Eslanda, along with Shirley Graham and WEB Du Bois were the premier couples of the Left during a very difficult era. All were accomplished – Eslanda Robeson was a distinguished writ-

er – and all were mutually supportive, generally speaking. They visited each other's homes and shared confidences at a time when the shrivelling Left was being shunned by many. Du Bois's granddaughter recalls a time in the 1950s when Robeson was 'invited...to come over' to the Du Boises' Brooklyn home to test a 'new piano' that Graham Du Bois had just bought. She had neglected to purchase 'the [appropriate] bench' for this instrument. 'Paul came bounding up the spiral suitcase...and immediately saw the new piano, and off he went and sat down on the bench' by the piano, 'which immediately splintered into 10,000 pieces of wood. And he just landed up on the floor in the most ungraceful position possible.' Nonetheless, the basso profundo still immediately launched into a rousing rendition of 'Ol' Man River.'

Eslanda's relationship with Shirley Graham Du Bois (who wrote a biography of Paul) was at times a strained one as both were the wives of men of international reputation. Graham felt that Eslanda did not "treat Paul right" (Home 2002:143) as she was more reverential of male figures while Eslanda was headstrong and self-assured, a quality that would have been vital to her development as an intellectual, and in the shadow of her husband's lofty presence.

5. See Gish (2000) and Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation for a discussion of the experiences of black South Africans in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century.

6. I am thinking here, chiefly, of the 1955 Bandung Non-Aligned Movement Conference, initiated by Nasser of Egypt, Nehru of India, Sukarno of Indonesia and Tito of Yugoslavia.

7. Highly confident and intelligent, Eslanda Robeson was raised in a cultured environment. She enrolled in a domestic science program at the University of Illinois on a full scholarship. She soon lost interest, however, in both her curriculum and in the school environment and transferred instead to the Teachers College of Columbia University in New York City. There she undertook a more challenging programme in the physical sciences and graduated with a degree in chemistry in 1920. She then went on, as we discuss later, to a graduate education in anthropology in London and then Hartford, Connecticut, and the role of intellectual became central to her identity.

8. The Greenwood Press reprinted the book in 1974.

9. As Wayne (1985:533) writes of her father: "He expected women to be intellec-

tually equal to men; he expected both his wives to be his co-workers; and I must say he gave his daughters the gift of never feeling that women are inferior to men. That was by no means a common gift in my youth.”

10. As Radcliffe-Brown (1946:39) writes of functionalism:

This type of theory aims at the explanation of anthropological facts at all levels of development by their function, by the part which they play within the integral system of culture, by the manner in which they are related to each other within the system, and by the manner in which the system is related to the physical surroundings. It aims at the understanding of the nature of culture rather than at conjectural reconstructions of its evolution or of past historical facts.

11. Malinowski's *Diary* is also important for it gives currency to the claims of post-colonial and postmodern suggestions about the deeply self-reflexive nature of ethnography as textual practice. As Geertz (1967:112) goes on to consider the subject of the *Diary*, “An iconoclast all his life, Malinowski has in this gross, tiresome, posthumous work [...] destroyed one final idol, and one he himself did much to create: that of the fieldworker with extraordinary empathy for the natives.”

Conclusion

CONNECTING CONCERNS: THE MEANING OF 'DIASPORA' AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURAL MEMORY IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

What people had shed and left – a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes – these alone kept the human shape and the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated; how once hands were busy with hooks and buttons; how once the looking glass had held a face; had held a world hallowed out in which a figure turned, a hand flashed, the door opened, in came children, rushing and tumbling; and went out again.

Virginia Woolf,
To the Lighthouse

In this study I have sought to trace the intellectual histories of black South Africans and African-Americans engaged in conversation, both in a literal, literary and ideological sense, through the close reading of several texts that indicate a variety of responses by such diasporic subjects to the conditions of transatlantic connection. This has entailed the selection of an unconventional array of texts and voices to read the ways in which this form of the African diasporic, interstitial space has been circulated, formed and reformed in the first part of the twentieth century. My intention has never been to suggest that the case studies presented here exemplify the full experience or typify the complex range of interrelations that are this study's focus. In other words, I am not purporting a singular, final statement on the travelling subject and the voices of the African diaspora as reworked in a South African context. This would be specious and impossible to substantiate. I also included the white liberal imaginings of Ethelreda Lewis in this thesis, meant to complicate the ways in which we read, textualise and apprehend Black Atlantic history.

An innumerable array of voices constitutes this range of histories, indicating many possibilities of what could have been considered in this study. In undertaking this research project there was much implied in the selection

of the subjects whose texts I have chosen to engage with and analyse. I was led to a choice confirmed by, firstly, the need to delimit the focus to realistically complete a project within the constraints of time and, secondly, by the finding of a common theme around which the subjects could be bound. As I have suggested, the case studies presented here explore the intellectual linkages and circuits between South African writers and African-American domains of experience, in terms of what I have called 'writing between'. This has entailed the employment of what some might consider an amorphous conception of the black diasporic experience. While such terms as the 'Black Atlantic', the 'black world' and the 'pan-African' movement itself were presented collectively, this was intended to provide a context to the literary-historical discussion being undertaken, rather than to imply that there was little substantive difference between them.

A significant challenge presents the literary scholar who intends to engage with non-literary, historical texts. We are always bound by history and context – and, of course, the particularity of the experience of the 'African diaspora'. Separate from a multitude of other historical phenomena and socio-cultural experiences with similar diasporic, transnational movements of peoples, the 'African diaspora' was employed as a context for a focus on the engagement between African-American and black South African literary and cultural interrelations. Nevertheless, Brent Hayes Edwards has stressed important distinctions between different conceptions and experiences of the African diaspora. He writes in an important article on the intellectual history and trajectories of the term:

[...] I want to excavate a historicized and politicized sense of diaspora for my own work, which focuses on black cultural politics in the interwar period, particularly in transnational circuits of exchange between the so-called Harlem Renaissance and pre-Négritude Francophone activity in France and West Africa. I am rethinking the *uses of diaspora* more precisely to compel a discussion of the *politics of nominalization*, in a moment of prolixity and careless rhetoric when such a question is often the first casualty. (Edwards 2001:45-46)

Edwards's precise use of the term indicates one of the problems with bringing together a disparate range of voices bound by a focus on a particular national context – South Africa. In examining 'diaspora' we should be concerned with its "constitutive differences" (Edwards 2001:54). As my work, in an archival sense, has sought to bring together an assortment of voices, seemingly unrelated in context and identity, I have been compelled to focus less on the distinctiveness and differences of this contrasting range of diasporic experiences, and rather on the ways in which the three writers considered in this study engaged the South African experience (be it inside or outside the country) at the moment of their writing. For DDT Jabavu, his connections to the African diaspora would always remain tenuous, employed only to provide a sign of the 'high civilisation' that he would aim towards as an educated African intellectual. Ethelreda Lewis sought to evoke a sense of transnational blackness that suited the ideological purposes of a white liberal segregationist project in 1930s South Africa. Eslanda Robeson was drawn to an ideational African past, where she could reconnect with her racial heritage and further the political and cultural aims of what she considered her people. These three writers expressed very different conceptions and commitments to the diaspora, and this study has attempted to examine some of the articulations of the term. Edwards's (2001) preciseness is useful, but only in tracing the intellectual history of the term 'diaspora'. That preciseness is not what accents the concerns of this project, but rather challenges the reading and critique of the studies themselves.

The history of the Black Atlantic is defined in tragedy and the recent decline in the validity of nationhood as a marker of identity complicates this. This is an uncertain space. By constructing what could be seen as a minor archive in the production of this study, or what I would call a marginal narrative, I have attempted to assemble an alternative history of the interrelation of African diasporic subjects, rather than be limited by the nation-bound focus of past accounts. In other words, I have not focused on the engagement of one group with another, but rather on the mutuality of experience between them.

The task in this conclusion is to connect these voices (Jabavu, Lewis and Robeson) to the post-apartheid project of reconstructing the archive of pre- and apartheid history. Thus, we are attempting to revision the sub-

stance of past accounts and fragments of memory in relation and through something new. There has also been, as I argue later, because of the legacy of apartheid and white hegemony over the production and maintenance of cultural forms such as writing, the tendency for South African scholars to focus on black and marginalised voices without due consideration of the plethora of other social-historical forces and voices that have been formative in the progression of the country's anti-apartheid narrative. In other words, I have sought in this project to challenge the liberal impulse to ignore politically undesirable subjects implicated in the colonial enterprise. This is because they are important for contextualising and reconstructing fragmented histories torn asunder by the violence of minority repression. "The current transformation of cultural institutions prompts us to reassess the 'parallel' constitutive actions, gestures, and visions of the past" (Merrington 1995:644).

I chose the instability of the nomad, the travelling subject, as my unifying theme, because of the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and its defining condition of the displaced human being. Thus, it became possible to delimit the focus of my analysis to those black (and white) subjects who, through some engagement or connection with this history, had travelled between African and American spaces, both autobiographically and imaginatively. The imperial travel narrative has been of particular interest to post-colonial scholars recently. The theme of travel has allowed me to engage a diverse range of identities, both American and South African, while employing an interdisciplinary approach that demanded that I make use of several forms of theory and analysis to enliven the reading.

* * *

The complex politics of the state of wandering and dislocation that defines the distinct moment of modernity that is the Black Atlantic suggests that it is a 'fugitive' form of experience (see Attwell 2005) commensurate with the postmodern condition. This resistant condition, this counter-narrative to the white, colonial predominance over history and meaning has led the black, often diasporic, subject to attempt to find alternate means to explain and construct a sense of self within the nomadic spaces of the traveller and

the psycho-historical metaphors of African diasporic history. Coupled with this, and tantamount to what has been the impetus for this project, I am concerned here with asking several questions: Who writes and constructs the archive? Who are its constituent voices? And from what position is this present narrative being constructed and written?

With these questions in mind I have also realised that no attempt at narrative is ever complete. The resulting efforts are always unbounded, open, contingent. There will be details that are missed, facts that I never came upon, flaws in the thinking and setting out that may only be resolved in rewriting. The effluvia of human legacy in the archive never quite leave the skin as the dust clings to you, leaving afterthoughts and memories that remain when you have left those places of memory and forgetting. There is the trauma felt when you have departed from the site; I read of it in the musings of a historian:

You know you *will not finish*, that there will be something left unread, unnoted, untranscribed. You are not anxious about the Great Unfinished, knowledge of which is the very condition of your being there in the first place, and of the grubby trade you set out in, years ago. You know perfectly well that the infinite heaps of *things* they recorded, the notes and traces that these people left behind, constitute practically nothing at all. There is the great, brown, slow-moving strandless river of Everything, and then there is its tiny flotsam that has ended up in the record office you are at work in. (Steedman 2002:18, author's emphasis)

And of course, once you leave there is something that you realise that you have forgotten, part of the minutiae of details, the fragmentary, the dislocated that would provide some vital consequence of meaning to the narrative that you are attempting to construct, to imagine through cultural historiography.

Having left behind the romance and euphoria of liberation in 1994, the white liberal intellectuals who have been instrumental in the formation of archives of 'the voices of the marginalised' have engaged with the archive

as a subject of deconstruction and reformation. This took place through Jacques Derrida's reflections on the archive, with its Freudian/psychoanalytic focus, in his 1994 lecture published as *Archive Fever* (1996) and subsequent visit to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in 1998. His lecture in South Africa was published with a range of local responses as *Refiguring the Archive* (Hamilton *et al* 2002). In *Archive Fever*, Derrida guides us through an extended meditation on remembrance, religion, time, and technology – concomitant with a deconstructive analysis of the notion of archiving. He constructs a synergistic reading of archives and archiving, both provocative and compelling. Derrida's focus in this book is the question of memory. He also reveals, and certainly not for the first time, an interest in a more general topic: the relationship between truth and authority.

The *Refiguring the Archive* project, as a response to Derrida's work and in the aftermath of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), was intended to transform the fabric of the country's unwritten and marginalised histories. As the authors write, "The figuring by our apartheid and longer pasts must be challenged, and space must be opened up in the archives by a transforming society" (Hamilton *et al* 2002:7). In their introduction to the collection of essays, the editors wanted to "engage the idea of the taken-for-granted, often implicit, 'archive' that is the foundation of the production of knowledge in the present, the basis for the identities of the present and for the possible imaginings of community in the future" (2002:9). In partnering with the country's National Archives, the project would allow the institution to be open to "transformational energies and to provide a forum in which it could reach out to new constituencies" (2002:10). In Derrida's thinking the TRC proceedings become a new form of archive and part of a form of national catharsis connected to justice and the search for healing after a traumatic experience. He emphasises that "the archive is also an act of forgetting" (Derrida 2002:77) and necessitates the removal of certain elements from the record of history.

This project of refiguring is intended as part of the wider project of forming a post-apartheid Archive that re-narrates, melds together the disparate, marginalised voices written out of history by the white colonial hegemony and regime of the past. Through their liberal intentions, I argue that they are engaging in a form of moral and ideological reparation, a range of

apologies for the wrongs of white colonial hegemony. Moran expresses it more eloquently:

The seductive self-image of the scholar as intermediary between past and present, fashioning reassuring allegories from the amber of the archive, goes some way toward deferring recognition of the historical forces that have determined who exactly is in a position 'to remember and transcribe and collect'. In our war of development hope lies in the regressive anticipation of mythic insight on behalf of a tradition of 'white academics' blinded by the unmistakable aura of legacies. At a glance a decision is made: the dangerously compressed image of the symptom is switched, as if by magic, into a token of the cure. (2004:296).

Of course, the set of ideological practices are themselves defined in the selection of voices, of pre- and colonial fragments of colonised black history and culture, that are considered suitable to be arranged with the canonical and dust-bound structures of this pre-ordained archive of the repentant.

The repentant, as I suggest, exclude the presence of the colonial discourse and white writing and colonialist representations of Africa as subjects for concern and analysis in their contemporary focus. The present South African government itself, of course, who have funded the project of refiguring the archive, also seek to valorise the voices of those wrongly neglected and made unknown by the monologic imperatives of the apartheid authority's version of South African history. Their position is understandable but largely ignores the transnational energies that this project has invoked throughout. Apartheid erased the space, knowledge and existence of the ever-acknowledged segregationist measures and the repression of black South Africans, and with it the knowledge and existence of the black intellectual class that existed at the end of the nineteenth- and turn of the twentieth-century.

It is not the purpose of this concluding essay to present a substantive critique of Derrida's ideas or the problems of the *Refiguring* project, but rather to connect the imperatives of the latter to what my own research has attempted to achieve. Of course, my attempt at refiguring is only of minor

(or fragmentary) importance in relation to the imagining of a broader national attempt. I am wary of the very criticism that defines my own purposes here. I have already elaborated on the dust that clings to the researcher after departing the site of memory. I have attempted to read the voices of those who have been considered of minor historical importance. Yet, in a literary sense, of course, their writing has been considered marginal and not worthy of investigation beyond the substance of a historiography. Eckstein (2006:ix) suggests that literature not only acts as a support for, or challenge to, cultural memory, it is a “complex *lieu de memoire* with its very own forms and strategies of observation and writing from older memories and their diverse representations.” In this study I have attempted to show how texts of several genres might be treated through literary-critical analysis. In this fashion I have attempted to connect the concerns of history with the means of treating literature as a form of social memory, that supplements and challenges the workings of social memory.

* * *

In the introduction to this study, we began with a ‘precursor’ text, John Dube’s *A Familiar Talk upon my Native Land and Some Things Found There* (1892), and here I briefly consider the diasporic imaginings present in Zakes Mda’s most recent novel, *Cion* (2007). This is because such imaginings speak to new possibilities of intercultural engagement and dialogism between diasporic spaces, as character (in the form of the protagonist) and author (a major black South African writer now teaching creative writing at Ohio University), have traversed the Atlantic passage with the intent to engage the familiar Other. Attwell does something similar as he concludes his book *Rewriting Modernity* (2005), on the response of black South Africans to the forces of colonial modernity, with a consideration of experimentation in fiction. He refers to the historicising tendencies and interplays of temporality in Mda’s novels *Ways of Dying* (1995) and *The Heart of Redness* (2000). For Attwell, this “fully-fledged experimentalism” (2005:169) represents a significant turn in the modes and means of writing by black South Africans and intellectuals.

In *Cion*, Mda centres his story upon the professional mourner Toloki,

a black South African who makes his way through America on the eve of the 2004 presidential election. Toloki is taken in by an impoverished Southern family and he befriends the son, Obed, and falls in love with his sitar-playing sister, Orpah. But by far the most important element of the novel – and for the concerns of this essay – is that he learns to quilt from their mother, Ruth. Simultaneously, he learns how the quilts link Ruth's ancestry to the slave trade and, in particular, the escape of Nicodemus and Abednego, the beloved sons of a slave called The Abyssinian Queen. Cross-cutting between the slave story and Toloki's experiences, the book offers a rich picture of the history of culture of the United States.

Toloki appeared earlier as the protagonist of Mda's first novel, *Ways of Dying* (1995). His innovative use of Toloki as the protagonist in *Cion* indicates an interesting attempt at a diasporic imagining that ranges across transatlantic history, and obviously establish a point of connection between African-American and black South African experience. The past and present, and the boundaries of the passage of time between them, are blurred in all of Mda's writing. In *Cion*, through the re-appearance of Toloki, Mda mediates between black experiences of oppression and survival in South Africa and the United States. As in all of Mda's writing, a connection with history and the forces of memory in the present, are maintained. There is a pronounced interplay between the past and the present.

The moment of the Underground Railroad, when African-Americans were escaping to the North through risky means, was one of the most harrowing in the history of slavery in the United States. Toloki encounters the slave, Nicodemus, a ghost from the past who he is able to converse with in the present. Through this, Mda merges two histories in an attempt to establish congruence and duality at this point. He affirms Toloki's peripatetic nature, and has set out to launch the black South African into the world, on an epic quest for meaning and fulfilment in his profession. Of course, the protagonist's first point of engagement, as he writes in the first person, is with the same Other, the apposite figure of blackness and suffering who shares the mutual heritage of a continent.

In the interest of transgressing the limits of a reductive conception of cultural identity, perhaps sustained in the racist history of the South with its binaries of blackness and whiteness, Toloki, from the other southern space,

establishes the tangled and heterogeneous nature of his own self: “I try to explain to her that there are strong possibilities that my ancestry is a Khoikhoi one, which is the case for many Southern Sotho and Nguni people in South Africa. I am aware that I may well be speaking gibberish; this will not make sense at all to either mother or son” (25). At the Kilvert Community Centre, Toloki learns of the art of quilt-making and Ruth tells Toloki of their cultural and metaphorical role as visual records of the cycles of memory that are part of any community.

[Ruth’s] eyes brighten as she tells me how her people are a quilting people. For generations and generations before her. Old quilts embody the life of the family. [...] Cycles of loves and losses were enacted on the quilts. *The souls of those who are gone rest in the very threads of the quilts.*

[...]

[The quilts] bound the individuals into a cohesive force, and reminded them of their duty to freedom. [...] Quilts were like sayings [...] they were like adages and proverbs learnt from their elders and were effective in jolting the people’s memory and in recording the values of the community for present and future generations. Quilt designs did not map out the actual route to the Promised Land but helped the seekers to remember those things that were important in their lives. They did the same work as spirituals. Like the stories the storytellers and the griots of the old continent told whose rhymes and rhythms forced people never to forget them and the history they contained, the patterns and colours and designs and ties and stitches of quilts were mnemonic. (Mda 2007:30,109-110; my emphasis)

The fragmented nature of the quilts and their melding together of multiple narratives is an important as a metaphor for what this project has set out to achieve. By bringing together many voices I have sought to examine the point at which opposing transatlantic histories converge. The beauty of the metaphor is that it speaks of creation, life, sexuality, regeneration – and

not only of death, forgetting. The continuity of the community is made in memory, of course, but the quilt is also the surface on which new generations are created, born from, and at the symbolic level, the 'fabric' of their ancestors. I propose that we might read this as another form of archive, one that is imaginatively expressed, but that indicates an important convergence of diasporic histories. It provides a useful point at which to end this study because it speaks of new possibilities and it indicates another way in which Mda fashions layers of history and meaning through fiction.

In this coda to the study, I have attempted to extend the meaning of the 'archive' to include marginal, non-textual forms. The selection of texts, both fictional and autobiographical, that have been the focus of this study might be compared, in the case of Mda's quilts, to the ways in which the fabric of a shroud that envelops the conscience and self-sense of a community's past, is embodied in the very *fabric* of history, patched together, collected, gathered, assembled, that is the patina of fragments within the quilt that the people of Kilver establish the continuity of their lives. By reaching beyond the limits of normative definitions of the archive, to embrace marginal forms that act as repositories of memory, is to admit that within this spirit of the re-assembly of the forgotten, we can arrive at the same notion of re-invigorated archive that this study purposed to achieve. As I have said throughout, the bringing together of disparate voices in this thesis, fits well comparatively with Mda's imaginative project in *Cion*. I have, in less elegant fashion, attempted to transgress the limits of an Atlantic expanse to reconnect the diasporic networks of affiliation of the past, both real and imagined.

Early on in *Cion*, Ruth reworks the history that two quilts made by her great-grandmother before the Civil War capture, affirmed in their "musty" odour:

One is an Irish Chain - that's the name of the design. The other one is an African quilt. That also is a design. Or a series of designs. And then she gives me her beaming smile and asks: 'Do you know why it's called an African quilt, you being from Africa and all?' Without waiting for my answer, which would not have been forthcoming in any case because I do not know and none of the patterns look African to my

untrained eye, she explains that her African ancestors used these quilts to escape from slavery. She does not elaborate on how quilts could be used to escape from slavery, except to vaguely mention something about following slave trails on the designs. (30)

This point of convergence between African and African-American histories is also a point at which maps of past and present liberations arise through memory and reflection in the present. These “trails” inscribe a form of resistance that is connotative of the Pan-African circuits of culture that I have attempted to uncover and explore in this study. Concluding at this point, it is clear that the beginnings of new forms of diasporic imagining gestured towards in the work of writers such as Mda, suggest that the field of African diasporic literary history is rich with possibilities for refiguring and writing new forms of narrative in the future.

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